



**EXPERIENTIAL TESTIMONIES
BEFORE THE JUDGMENT SEAT
OF CHRIST**

VOLUME 1

THE CHURCH OF ALMIGHTY GOD



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1. I Am Fortunate to Do Service for God

By Gensui, South Korea

Almighty God says, **“By what means is God’s perfection of man accomplished? It is accomplished by means of His righteous disposition. God’s disposition primarily consists of righteousness, wrath, majesty, judgment, and curse, and He perfects man primarily by means of His judgment”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Only by Experiencing Painful Trials Can You Know the Loveliness of God). **“Before the time of the service-doers, man understood nothing of the pursuit of life, what it means to believe in God, or the wisdom of God’s work, and nor did he understand that God’s work can test man. From the time of the service-doers through to today, man sees how wondrous is the work of God—it is unfathomable to man. Man is unable to imagine how God works by using his brain, and he also sees how small his stature is and that too much about him is disobedient. When God cursed man, it was in order to achieve an effect, and He did not put man to death. Although He cursed man, He did so through words, and His curses did not actually befall man, for what God cursed was the disobedience of man, and so the words of His curses were also spoken in order to make man perfect. Whether God judges man or curses him, both make man perfect: Both are done in order to make perfect that which is impure within man. Through this means man is refined, and that which is lacking within man is made perfect through His words and work. Every step of God’s work—whether it be harsh words, or judgment, or chastisement—makes man perfect, and is absolutely appropriate. Never throughout the ages has God done work such as this; today, He works within you so that you appreciate His wisdom. Although you have suffered some pain**

within you, your hearts feel steadfast and at peace; it is your blessing to be able to enjoy this stage of the work of God. Regardless of what you are able to gain in the future, all that you see of God's work in you today is love. If man does not experience God's judgment and refinement, his actions and fervor will always remain at surface level, and his disposition will always remain unchanged. Does this count as having been gained by God?" (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Only by Experiencing Painful Trials Can You Know the Loveliness of God). These words of God are really moving for me. I can feel that God's work of judgment and chastisement is entirely to cleanse and save mankind. I can't help but think of the first trial I went through after accepting God's work of the last days, which was the trial of the service-doers.

One day in February 1991, I was attending a gathering just like always when a brother said to us happily, "The Holy Spirit has uttered words!" The brothers and sisters then began to read: **"Praise has come to Zion and God's dwelling place has appeared. The glorious holy name, extolled by all peoples, spreads. Ah, Almighty God! The Head of the universe, Christ of the last days—He is the shining Sun that has risen upon Mount Zion, which towers in majesty and grandeur over all the universe ..." "You have made a group of overcomers and fulfilled God's management plan. All peoples shall flow to this mountain. All peoples shall kneel before the throne! You are the one and only true God and You deserve glory and honor. All glory, praise, and authority be to the throne!"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 1). Even though I didn't entirely understand this at the time, when I heard it, I felt that it was very special, very moving, and no human could have spoken such words. I was certain that these words had come from God, that they were the utterances of the Holy Spirit. After that,

chapter after chapter of the Holy Spirit's words were being sent to our church all the time, words that revealed many truths of faith and mysteries of the Bible, and also opened up to us the path for practicing the truth and entering into life. During that time we had gatherings almost every day to read the Holy Spirit's words. It was so sustaining and nourishing for our hearts. Everyone was immersed in joy and delight and felt so blessed. We all thought we were among the first who had been raised up before God, that we were the overcomers who God would make, that we'd certainly have a share in the kingdom of heaven, and we'd be fit to receive God's promises and blessings. Full of faith, we all expended ourselves for God. Some were furiously copying out the Holy Spirit's words, some were putting them to music to make them into hymns. Our circumstances were also really trying at the time, with quite a few brothers and sisters being arrested while at gatherings. I wasn't timid or afraid, but kept enthusiastically expending myself for God.

Just as I was filled with hopes of being blessed and getting into the kingdom of heaven, God uttered new words and ushered us into the trial of the service-doers. One day in October I was notified to go to a church gathering 25 miles away to collect new words uttered by the Holy Spirit. I thought there had to be wonderful news, so I excitedly got on my bike and rode to the gathering place, humming a tune and bursting with energy. To my surprise, when I arrived I saw my brothers and sisters looking troubled and all hanging their heads. One brother said to me, "The Holy Spirit has uttered words. God says that we're all service-doers." A sister said, her eyes filled with tears, "We're all service-doers. Chinese people are for providing service and we won't get any blessings at all." I just couldn't believe it was true. I rushed to read the Holy Spirit's words, and read this from God: **"In China, apart from My firstborn sons and My people, all the others are**

the offspring of the great red dragon and are to be discarded. You must all understand, China is after all a nation cursed by Me, and a few of My people there are nothing more than those that render service for My future work. To say it another way, apart from My firstborn sons, there is no one else—they are all to perish. Do not think that I am too extreme in My deeds—this is My administrative decree. Those who suffer My curses are objects of My hatred, and this is set in stone” (The

Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 95).

Reading this left me stunned. Service-doers had been mentioned many times in the Holy Spirit’s words, and I had always thought it meant the unbelievers. But it turned out that it was about us. It said that Chinese people are service-doers who will be cursed by God, and when they’ve completed their service, they’ll be thrown into the bottomless pit. I felt my whole body go weak. I’d never imagined I was a service-doer. Had all those years of faith been for nothing? Not only would I not be blessed in the kingdom of heaven, but I’d be thrown into the bottomless pit! I felt like I’d been tossed into the abyss. I was miserable, and complaints began to surface. I thought about how I’d given up my studies to follow the Lord, how the people of the world mocked me, how my friends and family couldn’t understand, and about the Chinese Communist Party’s persecution and how I’d narrowly escaped arrest several times, but I’d never shrunk back, instead continuing to expend myself and make sacrifices. I’d suffered so much. I thought I’d get into the kingdom of heaven and enjoy blessings, but now I was a lowly service-doer. I couldn’t make heads or tails of it. I sat there for a while heaving sighs of despair. Other brothers and sisters were hanging their heads, some shed tears, some covered their faces and began crying out loud, and some brothers even wailed loudly.

On my way home after the gathering, I hardly had the strength to ride my bicycle. I wondered the whole way, “How could I be a service-doer?” The more I thought about it, the more wronged I felt, and my tears just kept coming. Back home, I wasn’t interested in doing anything at all, and even when I was walking, I would hang my head, unwilling to speak with anyone. Even breathing felt exhausting. I just couldn’t resign myself to being a service-doer who wouldn’t get any blessings in the end.

Chapter after chapter of God’s words were being released, and I read each one eagerly, longing for there to be a shred of hope in His words, that my outcome could be changed. But not only did I see nothing about the blessings I hoped for, but it was all harsh judgment. There were some of God’s words in particular that said: **“Those who render service and those who belong to the devil are the spiritless dead, and they must all be abolished and rendered into nothingness. This is a mystery of My management plan, and is a part of My management plan that mankind cannot fathom; however, at the same time, I have made this public to everyone. Those who do not belong to Me are against Me; those who belong to Me are the ones who are compatible with Me. This is utterly incontrovertible, and it is the principle behind My judgment of Satan. This principle should be known to all so that they can see My righteousness and justness. Everyone who comes from Satan will be judged, burned, and turned to ash. This, too, is My wrath, and from this My disposition is further made evident”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 108). **“After doing service for Me today, they must all leave! Do not loiter in My house; stop your constant shameless freeloading! Those who belong to Satan are all sons of the devil, and will perish forever”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 109). Seeing God judging and

cursing service-doers, I lost all hope and really felt I'd fallen straight into the bottomless pit. I don't even know how to describe that feeling of misery. I thought about how I'd just been in God's embrace, basking in His love, but now I'd been tossed out, condemned and cursed by God, cast into the bottomless pit. I sunk into the refinement of misery and became very negative. I didn't have the energy to pray, listen to hymns, or read God's words. I even started regretting everything I'd put in and sacrificed before. If I'd known it would turn out like that, I would have left myself an out, but now I was left with nothing. If my unbelieving friends and family members knew I'd turn out to be a service-doer and would end up empty-handed, wouldn't they mock me to no end? How could I show my face? What could I do? When I thought about that, I felt really reproached. Thinking over my years of faith, even though I'd suffered quite a bit, I'd enjoyed a lot of God's grace and blessings. Today I'd been elevated by God to hear His new words, and I'd learned so many mysteries and truths. I couldn't depart from God no matter what.

Just as we were living in pain, we read these words of God in a gathering: **"I desire only that you offer all your strength up to Me with all your heart and mind, and to the best of your ability. Whether today or tomorrow, whether you are someone who renders service for Me or someone who gains blessings, you should all exert your measure of strength for My kingdom. This is an obligation that all created people should take up, and it must be done and implemented in this way. I shall mobilize all things to render service for the beauty of My kingdom to be made ever new, and for My house to be made harmonious and united. No one is allowed to defy Me, and any who do so must suffer judgment and be cursed"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 100). The church leader at the time also

shared some fellowship of the brother from the Above. “Many people feel that it is shameful to be a service-doer, but that is utterly wrong. That we can render service to God today was something predestined by Him, and more than that, we were chosen by God to do so. In fact, rendering service to the supreme and almighty God is quite a glorious thing! We are humans who have been corrupted so deeply by Satan, and before God, we are all but tiny creatures. Who is fit to do service for God? Out of all of mankind, we are the ones God selected to do service for Him. We have gained much, and this is truly a great elevation from God. This is the fairest statement, and if we cannot comprehend it, then we are arrogant beyond all reason. Frankly speaking, God has allowed us—we who are completely lacking in humanity—to do service for Him; do you know, though, how much humiliation He has suffered? He is faced each day with such corrupt people as ourselves, yet who among us has ever given any thought to the great humiliation God has suffered? We always rebel against Him and defy Him, we judge Him by our own notions and imaginings, and we have broken His heart. How much anguish has God suffered? Truth be told, we are filled with corrupt dispositions, and when we do service for Him, we fall short of His requirements. With such behavior, we are not even fit to render service to God. How could we be fit to be His people?” Hearing this awakened me. God is the Creator, and He is supreme. I am lowly and miniscule, so being able to do service for Him is God’s elevation and kindness. But I didn’t know my own identity or status, believing that being a service-doer was lowly, and I was unwilling to do that for God. I was so arrogant and unreasonable. Thinking back, even though I’d pursued eagerly, making sacrifices and expending myself, it was all to gain blessings, to enjoy the blessings of the kingdom of heaven. I became really motivated when I read God’s words of promises and blessings for man, and I kept going even in

the face of CCP persecution. But when I read God's words saying we were service-doers who would be tossed into the bottomless pit, I began to complain and blame God, and even thought about betraying and abandoning God. How was I any kind of true believer? What I gave, what I sacrificed and expended was all tainted with my motives and impurities. It was to gain blessings, it was trying to cheat God, to make a deal with God. I was so selfish and despicable. I'd enjoyed so much of God's grace and blessings, the sustenance and watering of His words, but I wanted to betray Him the moment I didn't see blessings in it for me. I was totally lacking any conscience or reason. This thought left me full of remorse and self-reproach. I was the offspring of the great red dragon. I belonged to Satan and was not of God's house, and even my faith was motivated by being blessed. God is holy and righteous, and His disposition tolerates no offense. Going by my behavior and attitude toward God, I wasn't even worthy of being a service-doer. I should have been cursed and sent to hell by God long ago. God wasn't punishing me, but was allowing me to live with the very breath so that I had a chance to hear His utterances, accept His sustenance for life, and do service for God, the Most High. This was an extraordinary exaltation, and I should give thanks to God. What right did I have to complain? I knew I had to render service for God well!

In late November, we received more of God's new words. God says, **"After I return to Zion, those on earth will continue to praise Me as in the past. Those loyal service-doers will wait as ever to render service to Me, but their function will have come to an end. The best they can do is to contemplate the circumstances of My presence on earth. At that time, I will begin to bring disaster down onto those who will suffer calamity; yet everyone believes that I am a righteous God. I will certainly not punish those loyal service-doers, but only let them receive**

My grace. For I have said that I will punish all evil-doers, and that those who perform good deeds will receive the material enjoyment that I bestow, demonstrating that I am the God of righteousness and faithfulness Himself” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 120). I saw that God hadn’t abandoned us at all, and He wasn’t punishing us because we were the great red dragon’s offspring. God was still allowing us to be devoted service-doers for Him and praise Him on earth. This gave me a warm feeling, and I was really energized. I really felt that being able to do service for God was being exalted by Him, and it was a blessing. Over that period of time, we sang the hymn “It’s Our Good Fortune to Render Service to God” in every gathering: “Only through the revelation and judgment of God’s words do we see how deeply corrupted we are. Filled with the intent and desire to be blessed, how are we worthy to live before God? We are unfit to enter the heavenly kingdom; to render service to God is already His exaltation. Oh! By the grace of God we render service, and to render service is our good fortune. Whether through fortune or disaster, I wish only to do service to the end. Today, we can render service to God, and we feel so unworthy. Whatever our prospect, fate and outcome, we’ll follow God to the end. God uses His words to purify us, to recover our conscience and reason. Oh! We’re willing to work like beasts of burden for God and submit to His orchestrations and arrangements. With all our hearts, we’ll render service to God all our lives, and will forever praise God’s righteous disposition” (Follow the Lamb and Sing New Songs).

Once we were willing to do service for God, Almighty God uttered new words. This was February 20, 1992. He elevated us to be people of the kingdom and brought the trial of the service-doers to a close. God’s words say, **“The situation now is not what it once was, and My work has entered on a new starting point. That being so, there will be a new**

approach: All those who see My word and accept it as their very life are people in My kingdom, and being in My kingdom, they are people of My kingdom. Because they accept the guidance of My words, even though they are referred to as My people, this title is in no way secondary to being called My ‘sons’” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God’s Words to the Entire Universe, Chapter 1). Seeing that God had turned service-doers into His people of the Age of Kingdom, I felt happiness mixed with regret and self-reproach. I regretted that I’d been negative, weak, and devoid of hope during the trial of the service-doers, and had even complained to God, misunderstanding and blaming Him. I’d been unwilling to be His service-doer. I totally lacked devotion and obedience to God. This left me feeling really regretful and in God’s debt. I was happy that as the great red dragon’s offspring, so rebellious and corrupt, just because we didn’t give up through the trial, God elevated us to be people of the kingdom, to be members of His house. I could feel God’s great love for us, and gratitude and praise for God welled up in my heart.

After going through the trial of the service-doers, I saw the incredible wisdom in God’s work. He judges, chastises, and even curses people with His words, and although they’re harsh, leaving us in pain and feeling distressed, it’s all to purify and transform us. Though I’d been refined through God’s words, I’d seen His righteous disposition. He’s disgusted by our motives and impurities, and He’s disgusted by faith motivated by blessings. After this experience, my perspective on faith changed a bit. I stopped single-mindedly pursuing blessings and entry into the kingdom of heaven, but felt that to be a service-doer rendering service for the Creator is to be exalted by God, and it is a blessing for me. It makes me feel proud and honored!

2. Amid the Trial of Death

By Xingdao, South Korea

Almighty God says, **“God has come to work on earth in order to save corrupt mankind; there is no falsehood in this. If there were, He would certainly not have come to do His work in person. In the past, His means of salvation involved showing the utmost love and compassion, such that He gave His all to Satan in exchange for the whole of mankind. The present is nothing like the past: The salvation bestowed upon you today occurs at the time of the last days, during the classification of each according to kind; the means of your salvation is not love or compassion, but chastisement and judgment, in order that man may be more thoroughly saved. Thus, all that you receive is chastisement, judgment, and merciless smiting, but know this: In this heartless smiting there is not the slightest punishment. Regardless of how harsh My words might be, what befall you are but a few words that might appear utterly heartless to you, and no matter how angry I might be, what rain upon you are still words of teaching, and I do not mean to harm you or put you to death. Is this not all fact? Know that nowadays, whether it be righteous judgment or heartless refinement and chastisement, everything is for the sake of salvation. Regardless of whether today each is classified according to kind or the categories of man are laid bare, the purpose of all of God’s words and work is to save those who truly love God. Righteous judgment is brought to purify man, and heartless refinement is done to cleanse them; harsh words or chastening are both done to purify and are for the sake of salvation”**

(The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. You Should Put Aside the Blessings of Status and Understand God’s Will to Bring Salvation to Man). God’s words really move me and

make me think of the unforgettable experience I had over 20 years ago during the trial of death. I truly came to appreciate that God's judgment and chastisement are His love and salvation for man. No matter how harsh or upsetting God's words may be, they are only to cleanse and transform us.

It was February 1992. After the trial of the service-doers, God raised us up to be people of the Age of Kingdom and He gave us His requirements: focus on reading His words and putting them into practice, seek to know God, bear witness to God through trials and achieve the standard of the people of the kingdom as soon as possible. Back then, God's words often mentioned **"the people of My household"** and **"the people of My kingdom."** These words always made me feel like God saw us as His own family. I had such a sense of warmth and encouragement, so I strived to be one of God's people. I pray-read God's words and pondered His will from His words. I did my duty as best I could and resolved to follow God all my life. I was 22 years old. The guys my age were mostly married with kids by then. My unbelieving family kept trying to find me a wife, but I turned them all down.

I used to really love singing "Kingdom Anthem," especially this bit: **"In the sound of the kingdom's salute, Satan's kingdom topples down, annihilated in the thundering of the kingdom anthem, never to rise again!" "Who on the earth dares to rise and resist? As God descends to earth, He brings burning, brings wrath, brings catastrophes of all kinds. The earthly kingdoms are now God's kingdom!"** (Follow the Lamb and Sing New Songs, Kingdom Anthem (I) The Kingdom Descends Upon the World). I would think of how God's kingdom will manifest on earth, and when God's work is finished, the great disasters will come and everyone who opposes God will be destroyed. We who follow God, however, will survive and God will lead us into the kingdom to enjoy everlasting blessings. It was so wonderful to

think of all this. Back then, I thought that accepting Almighty God's name and being raised up to join the kingdom's people meant that getting into God's kingdom in this life was a done deal that no one could take from me. I was incredibly thrilled. Our spirits were revived and we were filled with joy. We expended ourselves for God tirelessly.

But God is righteous and holy, He sees into our very hearts, and He knows the notions, imaginings, and wild desires we harbor. Just when we were filled with hope that we'd get into the kingdom and revel in God's blessings, in late April, God uttered new words, ushering us all into the trial of death.

One day, a church leader held a gathering and read God's words: **“Whilst people are dreaming, I travel the countries of the world spreading the ‘odor of death’ in My hands among man. All people immediately leave behind vitality and enter the next tier of human life. Amongst mankind, no longer can any living things be seen, corpses are scattered everywhere, things that are filled with vitality immediately disappear without a trace, and the suffocating smell of corpses pervades the land. ... Today, here, the corpses of all people lie about in disarray. Without people knowing, I release the pestilence in My hands, and the bodies of man decay, leaving not a trace of flesh from head to toe, and I go far away from man. Never again will I congregate with man, never again will I come among man, for the final stage of My entire management has come to an end, and I will not create mankind again, will not pay any heed to man again. After reading the words from My mouth, people all lose hope, for they do not want to die—but who does not ‘die’ for the sake of ‘coming alive’? When I tell people I lack the magic to make them come alive, they burst out crying in pain; indeed, although I am the Creator, I only have the power to make**

people die, and lack the capability to make them come alive. In this, I apologize to man. Thus, I told man in advance that ‘I owe him an unpayable debt’—yet he thought I was being polite. Today, with the advent of the facts, I still say this. I will not betray the facts when I speak. In their notions, people believe there are too many ways by which I speak, and so they always clutch the words I give them whilst hoping for something else. Are these not the erroneous motivations of man? It is under these circumstances that I dare to ‘boldly’ say that man does not truly love Me. I would not turn My back on conscience and distort the facts, for I would not take people into their ideal land; in the end, when My work finishes, I shall lead them to the land of death” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God’s Words to the Entire Universe, Chapter 40). When I read “**although I am the Creator, I only have the power to make people die, and lack the capability to make them come alive,**” I felt so confused. “Why would God say such a thing?” I thought. “Man’s life and death are in God’s hands. Why say He lacks the ‘capability’ to make man come alive? Will we believers really still die in the end? We’re the people of the kingdom, so how could we die? It can’t be! But God wouldn’t joke with us. His words clearly state, ‘**When My work finishes, I shall lead them to the land of death.**’ Doesn’t that mean we’ll end up facing death? What is this all about?” I just couldn’t figure out why God would say such a thing. The other brothers and sisters around me looked like they were at a loss, too. The church leader then gave us fellowship: “Our flesh has been so deeply corrupted by Satan. It’s filled with satanic dispositions. We are arrogant, deceitful, selfish, and greedy, and we still lie and cheat all the time. We may believe in God and expend ourselves for Him, but we can’t put His words into practice. We still judge and blame Him when trials and tribulations come. This shows that our flesh is of Satan and resistant to

God. God's disposition is righteous, holy, and unoffendable. How could He let people who belong to Satan enter His kingdom? So when His work finishes, the great disasters will come, and if we as believers haven't gained the truth, if our life dispositions haven't changed, then we will still die."

Hearing this fellowship from the leader, I was flooded with emotions and didn't know how I was supposed to feel. I felt like heaven had suddenly come crashing down—I was in shock. Confusion and resentment filled my mind, and I thought, "As the last generation, aren't we the most blessed? God has raised us up to be the people of the Age of Kingdom. We're the pillars of God's kingdom. How could we die at the very end? I gave up my youth and hopes of marriage to follow God. I've run around, expended myself for God, and suffered a lot. I've been arrested and persecuted by the CCP, mocked and slandered by unbelievers. Why must I still die at the very end? Has all my suffering been in vain?" Thinking this hurt a lot. I felt a great weight bearing down on me and I could hardly breathe. I noticed everyone around me was feeling the same way. Some were quietly crying, while others buried their faces in their hands and wailed. After the gathering, my mother said with a sigh, "I'm over 60 years old, and I've accepted death. But you're so young, your life has just started...." Hearing her say this upset me even more and I couldn't hold back the tears. I tossed and turned in bed that night, unable to sleep a wink. I just couldn't figure it out. I'd expended myself so ardently for God and given up everything to follow Him, so why did I have to die in the great disasters? I really couldn't accept it, so I began thumbing through God's words hoping to find a clue, to see whether our outcomes could be changed. But I didn't find the answers I wanted. Dumbfounded, I thought, "Looks as though God really has condemned us and our deaths are certain. No one can change it. It's what Heaven has decreed."

Over the next few days, I felt really low. I was barely audible when I spoke and didn't want to do anything. I always used to work extra-long hours transcribing God's words until my hand hurt, but it never bothered me. I just wanted the brothers and sisters to read God's new utterances as soon as possible, but that sense of responsibility was now gone. My blazing hot fervor had suddenly cooled. When I transcribed God's words now, I would think, "I'm still young and haven't enjoyed the blessings of the kingdom of heaven yet. I really don't want to die like this!" I started to cry as I thought it all through. My heart was heavy during that time, and hurt just as if a knife had been put through it. The world had lost its savor for me. I felt as though the great disasters could come at any minute, and I didn't know when I was going to die. I felt like the world had ended.

Later, I read God's words and gained some self-knowledge, then slowly, over time, I felt free. I read this in God's words: **"Today, at the time of advancing toward the gate of the kingdom, all people start forging ahead—but when they arrive before the gate, I close the gate, I shut people outside, and demand that they show their entry passes. Such an odd move is completely counter to people's expectations, and they are all astonished. Why has the gate—which has always been wide open—suddenly been shut tight today? People stamp their feet and pace about. They imagine that they can worm their way in, but when they hand Me their false entry passes, I cast them into the pit of fire there and then, and seeing their own 'painstaking efforts' in flames, they lose hope. They clutch their heads, crying, watching the beautiful scenes within the kingdom but unable to enter. Yet I do not let them in because of their piteous state—who may upset My plan as they please? Are the blessings of the future given in exchange for people's zeal? Does the meaning of human existence lie in entering My kingdom as one**

pleases? ... I have long since lost faith in man and I have long since lost hope in people, for they lack ambition, they have never been able to give Me a heart that loves God, and always give Me their motivations instead. I have said much to man, and since people still ignore My advice today, I tell them of My view in order to prevent them misunderstanding My heart in the future; whether they live or die in the times to come is their business; I have no control over this. I hope they find their own path to survival. I am powerless in this” (The Word, Vol.

1. The Appearance and Work of God. God’s Words to the Entire Universe, Chapter 46). **“When people are ready to sacrifice their lives, everything becomes trifling, and no one can get the better of them. What could be more important than life? Thus, Satan becomes incapable of doing any more in people, there is nothing it can do with man. Although, in the definition of the ‘flesh’ it is said that the flesh is corrupted by Satan, if people truly give themselves over, and are not driven by Satan, then no one can get the better of them—and at this moment, the flesh will perform its another function, and begin to formally receive the direction of the Spirit of God. This is a necessary process, it must happen step-by-step; if not, God would have no means of working in the stubborn flesh. Such is the wisdom of God”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Interpretations of the

Mysteries of “God’s Words to the Entire Universe”, Chapter 36). I was so distressed as I contemplated God’s words. Wasn’t I feeling that negative and pained because I feared death and desired blessings too much? In the early days, I’d believed in God for blessings and to get into the kingdom of heaven. Though I’d been through the trial of the service-doers, and could let go of my desire for blessings a little and was resolved to do service for God, my deceitful and evil satanic nature was deeply rooted. Once God made us His people, my heart once again leapt in anticipation. I thought I’d surely be

able to get into the kingdom of heaven this time. I thought that by accepting God's name, being raised up by God to be one of the kingdom's people, giving everything up, and expending myself, then of course I would get into the kingdom of heaven. It was a dead cert. When God's work smashed my notions and took away my prospects and destination, I became weak and negative and complained to God. I even regretted the sacrifices I'd made in the past. I saw that all my efforts had been to get the blessings of the kingdom of heaven in return. Hadn't I been making deals with God, cheating Him and using Him? I revealed nothing but rebelliousness and complaints in the face of every trial. I wanted to obey Him but couldn't, and I couldn't practice truths I knew well. I realized that I was resistant to God by nature, that I was of Satan. Someone like me, so filled with satanic dispositions, should die and be destroyed. I was totally unfit to enter God's kingdom. This was determined by His righteous disposition. Having had the chance to follow God and know His righteous disposition meant that my life had not been wasted! I then said a prayer to God: "I don't want to live for my flesh anymore, but wish to submit to Your rule and arrangements. Whatever my end turns out to be, even if I die, I will still praise Your righteousness." When I stopped thinking about my end and destination and wished to obey God's arrangements even at the cost of my own life, I felt a wonderful sense of release.

But at that time, although we were able to obey and follow God regardless of our outcome, we didn't have a goal to pursue. But in May 1992, God expressed more words, telling us to seek to love God while alive and to live out meaningful lives. God had ushered us into the time of loving God, and the trial of death was over. Through reading God's words, gathering and fellowshiping, I realized that although man's fate is in God's hands and no one can escape death, God's will isn't for us to face death

negatively. He wants us to seek to love Him while we are alive, to be able to practice the truth, cast off our corrupt dispositions, and be fully saved. Only then will we be fit to enter His kingdom. I finally understood that by leading us into the trial of death, God wasn't leading us to our deaths, but revealing His righteous disposition to us. He did this so we could understand who He saves, who He destroys, and who is fit to enter His kingdom. I also saw just how corrupted by Satan I was and was able to let go of my notions, imaginings, and my desire for blessings. I became able to submit to God's rule and arrangements and really started pursuing the truth. This was God's salvation for me! I saw even more that God doesn't judge and chastise people because He hates us or wants to torment us, but to lead us onto the right path of pursuing the truth and being saved! Everything God does in us is not by the advent of facts. He gets results simply by expressing words that judge, chastise, test and refine us. God's work is so wise and His love and salvation for man are so real!

3. The Trial of a Foil

By Xingdao, South Korea

“Oh God! Whether I have status or not, I now understand myself. If my status is high it is because of Your elevation, and if it is low it is because of Your ordination. Everything is in Your hands. I have neither any choices, nor any complaints. You ordained that I would be born in this country and among this people, and all that I should do is to be completely obedient under Your dominion because everything is within what You have ordained. I do not give thought to status; after all, I am but a creature. If You place me in the bottomless pit, in the lake of fire and brimstone, I am nothing but a creature. If You use me, I am a creature. If You perfect me, I am yet a creature. If You do not perfect me, I will still love You because I am no more than a creature. I am nothing more than a minuscule creature created by the Lord of creation, just one among all created humans. It was You who created me, and now You have once again placed me in Your hands to do with me as You will. I am willing to be Your tool and Your foil because everything is what You have ordained. No one can change it. All things and all events are in Your hands” (Follow the Lamb and Sing New Songs, I’m Just a Tiny Created Being). Singing this hymn of God’s words is deeply moving for me. I can’t help but think of the experiences I had in the trial of a foil.

In early 1993, I had the duty of watering new believers in the church. We were in danger of being arrested wherever we went because of the Chinese Communist Party’s frantic persecution and arrests of Christians. In spite of the harsh environment, I never shrank back, but persisted in my duty. I read these words of God, **“Only those who love God are able to testify of God, only they are God’s witnesses, only they are blessed by**

God, and only they are able to receive God's promises" (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Those Who Love God Will Forever Live Within His Light). Then I felt full of faith to pursue becoming someone who loves God. I thought that kind of pursuit would gain God's approval and I'd definitely get into heaven and be one of the people of His kingdom.

Just as I was enthusiastically expending myself, certain I'd be taken into God's kingdom, Almighty God expressed words that threw me into the trial of a foil. One day in March, brothers and sisters sent God's new utterance to our church, "The Inside Truth of the Work of Conquest (1)." I read in God's words: **"Today, I work in God's chosen people in China to reveal all their rebellious dispositions and unmask all their ugliness, and this provides the context for saying everything I need to say. Afterward, when I carry out the next step of work of conquering the entire universe, I shall use My judgment of you to judge the unrighteousness of everyone in the entire universe, for you people are the representatives of the rebellious among mankind. Those who cannot step up will become merely foils and serving objects, whereas those who can step up will be put to use. Why do I say that those who cannot step up will only serve as foils? It is because My present words and work all target your background, and because you have become the representatives and the epitome of the rebellious among all of mankind. Later, I will take these words that conquer you to foreign countries and use them to conquer the people there, yet you will not have gained them. Would that not make you a foil? The corrupt dispositions of all mankind, the rebellious acts of man, and the ugly images and faces of man—these are all recorded today in the words used to conquer you. I will then use these words to conquer the people of every nation and every denomination, because you are the archetype,**

the precedent. However, I did not set out to intentionally abandon you; if you fail to do well in your pursuit and therefore you prove to be incurable, would you not simply be a serving object and a foil? I once said that My wisdom is exercised based on Satan's schemes. Why did I say that? Is that not the truth behind what I am saying and doing right now? If you cannot step up, if you are not perfected but are instead punished, would you not become a foil? Maybe you have suffered a good deal in your time, but you still understand nothing; you are ignorant of everything about life. Even though you have been chastised and judged, you have not changed at all, and deep within, you have not gained life. When the time comes to test your work, you will experience a trial as fierce as fire and even greater tribulation. This fire will turn your entire being into ashes. As someone who does not possess life, someone without an ounce of pure gold inside, someone still stuck with the old corrupt disposition, and someone who cannot even do a good job at being a foil, how could you not be eliminated?" (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God). I really had a reaction to seeing the word "foil" mentioned repeatedly in God's words. I thought, "Foil? God's mentioned a foil in His words before, but wasn't that referring to the great red dragon? I make sacrifices for God in my faith and I seek to love Him. I should be one of His kingdom's people. How could I be a foil?" I read God's words again, very carefully. God said that we Chinese people are the most deeply corrupted, that our resistance to God is the worst, and we're representatives of all mankind's rebelliousness. He said that if followers of God don't end up changing, if they haven't gained life, they'll serve as foils for God's work, and they'll all be eliminated by God. My chest tightened when I read this, and I wondered, "I'm a foil? That can't be. If I'm really a foil, can I still get into the kingdom of heaven?"

Not long after that, I read this fellowship from God: **“Because you are crooked and deceitful, and because you are lacking in caliber and you are of low status, you have never been within My sight or in My heart. My work is done with the sole intention of condemning you; My hand has never been far from you, nor has My chastisement. I have continued to judge and curse you. Because you have no understanding of Me, My wrath has always been upon you. Although I have always worked among you, you should know My attitude toward you. It is nothing but disgust—there is no other attitude or opinion. I only want you to act as foils for My wisdom and My great power. You are nothing more than My foils because My righteousness is revealed through your rebelliousness. I have you act as foils for My work, to be the appendages of My work...”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Why Are You Unwilling to Be a Foil?). I saw that God very clearly states that we are foils, that we are appendages of His work and He feels nothing but hatred and disgust for us. I was stunned and felt I’d been abandoned by God. I was really miserable and complaints arose within me. I thought, “I’ve believed all these years, given up my family and job, and I’ve suffered plenty expending myself for God. I’ve gone through the trial of the service-doers and the trial of death. Then I started pursuing love for God, thinking that becoming a person of the kingdom was in the bag. I never imagined I’d be a foil, a serving object, to be eliminated once I’m done being a counterpoint to God’s righteous disposition. Then what have I been paying a price for all these years? What would my friends and relatives think of me if they knew? They couldn’t understand when I gave up my job and family for my faith. They mocked me. So at the time I wanted to be a good believer so that once God’s work was completed and the great disasters came, I’d be taken into His kingdom. Then I could hold my head up high and they’d all be put to

shame. Who'd have thought I'd end up as low as a foil? Foils don't possess life. They're trash, not even as good as service-doers. At least service-doers can do service for God for a while and enjoy His grace and blessings. Even being a service-doer would be fine. In any case, it sounds better than being a foil."

The word "foil" just kept echoing in my head over the next few days, and I couldn't stop wondering, "How could I be nothing more than a foil? Why was I born in China? If the great red dragon hadn't corrupted the Chinese people so deeply, I would never be a foil! I thought I was about to get into God's kingdom and become one of its people, to enjoy what God has promised. I never thought I'd end up as a foil instead." I got more upset the more I thought about it and I couldn't stop crying. I figured since that was the case, there was nothing I could do but resign myself to my fate.

After that, even though I kept going to gatherings and doing my duty, my heart wasn't in it. I didn't have anything to say to God in prayer and I didn't have the heart to sing. I didn't gain any enlightenment from God's words. I felt that since I was a foil, there was no point in pursuing any further since I'd end up cast out and eliminated, thrown into the bottomless pit. I was feeling really negative and distressed. One evening as I was lying sleepless in bed, I thought about all those words uttered by God in His work in the last days that had been watering and sustaining us, and the trials and refinements that had been cleansing us. I particularly thought about the trial of the service-doers. At the time, although God stripped away our fleshly hopes and cursed us to the bottomless pit, it was a trial of words, and these things didn't actually befall us. It was through that trial that I gained some understanding that my motivation for faith was receiving blessings and I experienced a bit of God's righteous disposition. I saw that no matter what work God does, it's all done to cleanse and save us. I also remembered how

I'd resolved before God that I was happy to do service for Him. Then I felt some self-reproach and gained some motivation, and thought, "Whether I'm a service-doer or a foil, doing my duty for the Creator is right and proper, and no matter what God arranges in the future, even if I don't have a good outcome after my service, I will still do service for Him until the end." And so, I continued to perform my duty. But since I didn't understand God's will, whenever I thought about being a foil without gaining life or a good outcome, I'd still feel negative and upset.

In early April we received more of God's new utterances. I read this in God's words: **"In your seeking, you have too many individual notions, hopes, and futures. The current work is in order to deal with your desire for status and your extravagant desires. Hopes, status, and notions are all classic representations of satanic disposition. The reason that these things exist in people's hearts is entirely because Satan's poison is always corroding people's thoughts, and always people are unable to shake off these temptations of Satan. They are living in the midst of sin yet do not believe it to be sin, and still they think: 'We believe in God, so He must bestow blessings on us and arrange everything for us appropriately. We believe in God, so we must be superior to others, and we must have more status and more of a future than anyone else. Since we believe in God, He must give us limitless blessings. Otherwise, it wouldn't be called believing in God.'** For many years, the thoughts that people have relied upon for their survival have been corroding their hearts to the point that they have become treacherous, cowardly, and despicable. Not only do they lack willpower and resolve, but they have also become greedy, arrogant, and willful. They are utterly lacking any resolve that transcends the self, and even more, they don't have a bit of courage to shake off the strictures of

these dark influences. People's thoughts and lives are so rotten that their perspectives on believing in God are still unbearably hideous, and even when people speak of their perspectives on belief in God it is simply unbearable to hear. People are all cowardly, incompetent, despicable, and fragile. They do not feel disgust for the forces of darkness, and they do not feel love for the light and the truth; instead, they do their utmost to expel them" (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Why Are You Unwilling to Be a Foil?). God's words cut right to the quick. They entirely exposed my satanic disposition and my thoughts for my own survival. I felt really ashamed. I thought back to how at first, my faith was just to get blessings. **"Since we believe in God, He must give us limitless blessings. Otherwise, it wouldn't be called believing in God."** This was what I thought at the time. After going through the trials of the service-doers and of death, I started to understand my motives to gain blessings and became willing to do service for God, but deep in my heart, that desire for blessings was still really entrenched and hadn't been fully cleansed. Particularly when I saw God's promise of blessings for those who love Him, my desire for blessings was stirred up again. I thought I was certain to get into the kingdom of heaven this time, so I expended myself for God even more zealously. But when God exposed us as foils, as appendages, and targets of His disgust, I felt that my hopes for blessings had been dashed, that I had no future or status anymore. I felt incredibly wronged and I was full of complaints. I took my sacrifices and hard work as capital I could use to negotiate with God, to get a free pass from God into His kingdom, otherwise I wasn't willing to keep expending myself. Only then did I realize how serious my longing for status and my extravagant desires were. I didn't have a shred of genuine love or submission for God. It was all transactional, rebellious, and deceitful. Faced with the facts, I became utterly convinced. I

saw how deeply I'd been corrupted by Satan. I was arrogant, crooked, selfish, and despicable, totally devoid of conscience and reason. I also saw God's holy and righteous disposition that brooks no offense. Someone as corrupt as me, tainted by so many motives and corrupt dispositions, how could I not disgust God? Whatever God calls me, however He treats me, it is righteous.

I later read these words of God in a gathering: **“You should read more of these utterances that God has expressed during this period of time, and look at your actions by comparison: It is absolutely a fact that you are well and truly a foil! What is the extent of your knowledge today? Your ideas, your thoughts, your behavior, your words and deeds—do all of these expressions not amount to a foil to God's righteousness and holiness? Are your expressions not manifestations of the corrupt disposition revealed by God's words? Your thoughts and ideas, your motivations, and the corruption that is revealed in you show the righteous disposition of God, as well as His holiness. God, too, was born in the land of filth, yet He remains unsullied by filth. He lives in the same filthy world as you, but He is possessed of reason and perception, and He despises the filth. You may not even be able to detect anything filthy in your words and deeds, but He can, and He points them out to you. Those old things of yours—your lack of cultivation, insight, and sense, and your backward ways of living—have now been brought into the light by today's revelations; only by God coming to earth to work thus do people behold His holiness and righteous disposition”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. How the Effects of the Second Step of the Work of Conquest Are Achieved). **“Of course, God does not make you a foil just for the sake of it. Rather, it is only when this work bears fruit that it becomes evident that man's rebelliousness is a foil to God's righteous**

disposition, and it is only because you are foils that you have the chance to know the natural expression of God's righteous disposition. You are judged and chastised because of your rebelliousness, but it is your rebelliousness also that makes you a foil, and it is because of your rebelliousness that you receive the great grace that God bestows on you. Your rebelliousness is a foil to the omnipotence and wisdom of God, and it is also because of your rebelliousness that you have gained such great salvation and blessings. Though you have been repeatedly judged by Me, you have received tremendous salvation never before received by man. This work is of the utmost significance for you. Being a 'foil' is also extremely valuable for you: You are saved and have obtained the grace of salvation because you are a foil, so is such a foil not of the utmost value? Is it not of the utmost significance? It is because you live in the same realm, the same filthy land, as God, that you are a foil and receive the greatest salvation. If God had not become flesh, who would have been merciful toward you, and who would have looked after you, lowly people that you are? Who would have cared for you? If God had not become flesh to work among you, when would you have received this salvation, which those before you never had? If I did not become flesh to care for you, to judge your sins, would you not long since have fallen into Hades? If I had not become flesh and humbled Myself amongst you, how could you be qualified to be a foil to God's righteous disposition? ... Though I have used the 'foil' to conquer you, you should know that this salvation and blessing is given in order to gain you; it is for the sake of conquest, but it is also so that I might better save you. The 'foil' is fact, but the reason that you are foils is because of your rebelliousness, and it is because of this that you have gained blessings that no one has ever gained. Today you are made to see

and to hear; tomorrow you will receive, and, more than that, you will be greatly blessed. Thus, are foils not of the utmost value?” (The Word, Vol.

1. The Appearance and Work of God. How the Effects of the Second Step of the Work of Conquest Are Achieved). God’s words showed me what it means to be a foil. We were born in China, so we’ve been educated, influenced, and corrupted by the great red dragon all these years. We’re filled with satanic philosophies, atheism, evolution, and other fallacies. Our every thought is evil and contrary to the truth. But we don’t realize that, instead thinking we’re good people, that we accord with God’s will. Almighty God incisively exposes all of our satanic dispositions like arrogance, craftiness, and wickedness, and then He utterly convinces us by revealing the facts. When God expresses truths to judge and expose our corruption, His righteous disposition of hating sin and evil just naturally comes out. We see His holiness and His righteous disposition that tolerates no offense, then our corruption and evil become a foil to God’s righteous disposition. I also saw the love and salvation for mankind in God’s words, especially when He said, **“If God had not become flesh, who would have been merciful toward you, and who would have looked after you, lowly people that you are? Who would have cared for you?”** That was deeply moving for me. As I contemplated God’s words, I realized that God hasn’t discarded or eliminated us because of our filth and corruption, but instead, He’s had mercy on us, who’ve been so deeply corrupted and damaged by Satan. He personally became flesh to save us, suffering the greatest humiliations to work among us, expressing truths to water and sustain us, to judge and expose us. Even though He exposed us as foils, His will is not to eliminate us, but to have us recognize our own desire for status and our hopes for the future, to know our satanic dispositions of arrogance, deceit, and evil so that we can pursue the truth, cast off corruption, and be fully saved by God. This

is God's very practical love and salvation for us! Once I understood God's will, I thought about how I'd been behaving to God, and I wanted the ground to swallow me up. I was a paltry little created being, deeply corrupted by Satan, both filthy and debased. Being able to serve as a foil to God, the Most High, and having the chance to experience God's work and to witness His righteousness and holiness was God's great grace for me! If it weren't for God becoming flesh, speaking and working among us, how would I ever have the chance to understand so many truths? How would I have the chance to know His righteous disposition? Not only did I not thank God, but I tried to argue with God over being called a foil. I didn't have any reason or humanity. When I realized this, I felt how deeply I'd been corrupted by Satan, and how indebted to God I am. I wanted to repent to God, and I wanted to submit to God's orchestrations no matter what He calls me, and no matter what my future and destination are to be. I wanted to pursue the truth and a change in disposition.

By undergoing the trial of a foil, I gained some understanding of my motive to gain blessings and of my satanic disposition, and I realized that, high or low status, I'm nothing but a tiny created being and I should submit to what God arranges at all times. Even if I'm serving as a foil for God, I have to praise His righteousness, pursue the truth well, and do my duty as a created being. That's the proper testimony a creature should bear.

4. The Trial of the Descendants of Moab

By Zhuanyi, China

Almighty God says, “All the work done this day is so that man can be made clean and be changed; through judgment and chastisement by the word, as well as through refinement, man can purge away his corruption and be made pure. Rather than deeming this stage of work to be that of salvation, it would be more apt to say it is the work of purification. In truth, this stage is that of conquest as well as the second stage in the work of salvation. It is through judgment and chastisement by the word that man arrives at being gained by God, and it is through the use of the word to refine, judge, and disclose that all of the impurities, notions, motives, and individual aspirations within man’s heart are completely revealed” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Mystery of the Incarnation (4)). **“To work now on the descendants of Moab is to save those who have fallen into the greatest darkness. Although they were cursed, God is willing to gain glory from them, for they were at first all people whose hearts lacked God; only making those without God in their hearts obey and love Him is true conquest, and the fruit of such work is the most valuable and the most convincing. Only this is gaining glory—this is the glory that God wants to gain in the last days. Although these people are of low position, that they are now able to gain such great salvation is truly an elevation by God. This work is very meaningful, and it is through judgment that He gains these people. It is not His intention to punish these people, but to save them. If, during the last days, He were still doing the work of conquest in Israel, it would be worthless; even if it bore fruit, it would not have value or any great significance, and He would not be able to gain all glory”** (The

Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Significance of Saving the Descendants of Moab). Reading these words from God makes me think of my trial as a descendant of Moab.

I remember in 1993, Almighty God expressed “The Inside Truth of the Work of Conquest (2)” and “The Essence and Identity of Man.” He revealed that in China, God’s chosen people are all descendants of Moab. I read these words of God at the time: **“The descendants of Moab are the lowliest of all the world’s people. Some people ask, ‘Are not Ham’s descendants the lowliest of all?’ The progeny of the great red dragon and the descendants of Ham are of different representative significance, and the descendants of Ham are a different matter: Regardless of how they are cursed, they are still the descendants of Noah; the origins of Moab, meanwhile, were not pure: Moab came from fornication, and in this lies the difference”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Inside Truth of the Work of Conquest (2)). **“Those whom I save are humans whom I predestined long ago and have been redeemed by Me, whereas you are poor souls that have been placed amid humanity as exceptions to the rule. You ought to know that you do not belong to the house of David or Jacob, but to that of Moab, the members of which are of a tribe of Gentiles. For I did not establish a covenant with you, but only did work, spoke among you, and led you. My blood was not shed for you; I was merely carrying out My work in your midst for the sake of My testimony. Did you not know this?”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Essence and Identity of Man). I was so taken aback. I wondered, “Are we descendants of Moab? Is this true? Moab was born of Lot and his daughter. He was a product of debauchery, not of pure origins, so how could we be his descendants? In my faith in the Lord, they used to say we were descendants of Israelites, that we were of the house of Jacob. Why, then,

would God say we are descendants of Moab?” I really couldn’t accept this, but then I thought, “All of God’s words are the truth and He only reveals facts. It can’t be wrong! Why am I Moab’s descendant, and why was I born in China?” I thought that as one of the first to experience God’s judgment and chastisement, being among the first for God’s work of judgment and cleansing in the last days, and as someone who would be made into an overcomer, a model believer before the disasters, my status had to be greater than God’s chosen in any other country. But to my surprise, I was a descendant of Moab, and on top of being cursed by God, I was a product of debauchery. I was the lowest, the most debased of all of humanity. What would unbelievers think of me if they found out about that? What would my unbelieving family members say? I’d given up my home and my career for my faith, suffering and expending myself, but ultimately I was just a descendant of Moab. It was such a humiliating and shameful thing. I felt I had to suffer in silence. Over that period of time, the moment I thought about being a descendant of Moab, a product of debauchery, I was incredibly ashamed and couldn’t bear to show my face. I stayed at home for days at a time, not eating or sleeping, and didn’t have the heart to do anything around the house at all. Within my heart, I was just constantly complaining, “How could I be one of Moab’s descendants? How could my heritage and status be so lowly?” I was like someone who had grown up in a wealthy family, incredibly proud, thinking I was highborn, but then one day learning out of the blue that I’d been scooped up from the dregs, and didn’t belong to that lineage at all. I felt an inner turmoil of sorrow, helplessness, and dejection and I just couldn’t accept this fact. I was full of dissatisfaction, negativity, and misunderstandings. I thought that as a descendant of Moab, I was cursed, and God would never save me. The more I thought about it, the more wronged I felt. It was like there was an

enormous weight pressing down on my chest, and I could hardly breathe. I'd go steal away to cry alone in the bathroom. Everyone was suffering at the time. Some people cried whenever it was mentioned.

Just as we were suffering in this torment, Almighty God issued His words “The Significance of Saving the Descendants of Moab,” revealing our states and telling us what His will was. I read these words from God: **“In the beginning, when I gave you the position of God’s people, you jumped up and down, with greater joy than any others. Yet as soon as I said you are the descendants of Moab, how were you? You all fell apart! Where is your stature? Your concept of position is too strong! ... What kind of suffering have you endured that you feel so wronged? You think once God has tortured you to a certain degree, He will be happy, as if He came intending to condemn you, and after condemning and destroying you, His work will be done. Is that what I have said? Do you not think so because of your blindness? Is it that you yourselves do not strive to do well, or that I condemn you by design? I have never done that—that is something you thought up yourselves. That has never at all been how I work, nor do I have that intention. If I truly wanted to destroy you, would I need to undergo such hardship? If I truly wanted to destroy you, would I need to speak with you so earnestly? My will is this: When I have saved you, that will be when I can rest. The lowlier a person is, the more they are the object of My salvation. The more proactively you are able to enter in, the happier I will be. The more you fall apart, the more upset I am. You want always to strut up and assume the throne—I tell you, that is not the path of saving you from filth. A fantasy of sitting on the throne cannot perfect you; that is not realistic”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Significance of Saving the Descendants of Moab). I felt so guilty when I read this. I

thought about how before, when God said we'd become the people of the kingdom and that we would be made into overcomers, into models, I became arrogant and didn't know who I was, believing that since I was one of the first to accept God's judgment and chastisement and among the first to be perfected, I must have higher status than God's chosen people from any other country. I was so full of myself, so pleased with myself. When God revealed us as the descendants of Moab, I saw I was of lowly birth and status, and that I was cursed by God. I thought God would never save me, so I fell into negativity and couldn't snap out of it. I realized my desire for status was much too strong, and my stature was really lacking. In fact, even though God exposed us as Moab's descendants, He never said He wouldn't save us. After all, He became flesh in the great red dragon's country, and expressed truths to judge, chastise, water, and provide for us so that we, the most filthy, corrupt people, could have a chance to be saved by God. God's kind intentions are behind it all! But I didn't understand God's will. I thought that as a descendant of Moab, someone as filthy and lowly as me would be most hated and loathed by God, that there was no way He'd save me. I misunderstood and complained, becoming negative and resistant to God. I was so unreasonable! Shortly after that, I read these words of God: **"Even ignoring that you are the descendants of Moab, is your nature or your birthplace of the highest sort? Even ignoring that you are his descendants, are not all of you descendants of Moab, through and through? Can the truth of facts be changed? Does exposing your nature now misrepresent the truth of facts? Look at your servility, your lives, and your characters—do you not know that you are the lowliest of the low among mankind? What do you have to brag about? Look at your position in society. Are you not at its lowest level? Do you think I have misspoken? Abraham offered up Isaac—what have you offered up?"**

Job offered up everything—what have you offered up? So many people have given their lives, laid down their heads, shed their blood in order to seek the true way. Have you paid that price? By comparison, you are not at all qualified to enjoy such great grace. Does it wrong you to say today that you are the descendants of Moab? Do not regard yourselves too highly. You have nothing to brag about. Such great salvation, such great grace is given to you freely. You have sacrificed nothing, yet you enjoy grace freely. Do you not feel ashamed?” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Significance of Saving the Descendants of Moab). Each and every one of God’s questions knocked at the door to my heart. I was so embarrassed, so abashed! I thought of the saints through the ages—they were devoted and obedient to God, and never blamed Him when undergoing great trials. They stood witness for God and gained His approval and blessings. Abraham obeyed God’s commands, offering up Isaac, his most beloved son, to God. He didn’t negotiate any conditions or try to argue with God, but just absolutely obeyed. And when Job went through a great trial, losing all of his family possessions and all his children, his body covered with boils, he still praised God, saying, “Jehovah gave, and Jehovah has taken away; blessed be the name of Jehovah” (Job 1:21). But I was born in the great red dragon’s country, educated in atheism, evolution, and materialism from a young age. I never knew there was a God, much less knew how to worship Him. My faith was just to get God’s grace and blessings, so that later I could get into the kingdom of heaven and have a good destination. When faced with a trial, having no status and not getting any blessings, I just misunderstood and complained, getting negative and opposing God. I wasn’t truly obedient, and I wasn’t treating Him as God. Through those years of faith, I’d been enjoying the sustenance of God’s words freely, and the step-by-step guidance of God’s work. Not only was I not doing my duty

well to repay His love, but all I gave Him in return was misunderstanding and complaints, rebelliousness and resistance. What kind of believer was I? Even so, I'd come to think of myself as the apple of God's eye, as someone important to Him, and I thought I'd have higher status than God's chosen from any other country, that I'd be most qualified for God's rewards and blessings. I was so arrogant that I didn't know what was what. I had no self-awareness at all! If God hadn't revealed my filthy, lowly origin, I would still think I was from one of the 12 tribes of Jacob, that I was a child of Israel, a descendant of David. I really knew no shame! Now I knew my identity and status, so I kept a lower profile. I was not as insolent as I had been before. I also gained some reason before God. This was God's salvation for me! I shouldn't harbor any extravagant demands of God, and even if I wouldn't have a good outcome or destination in the end, I would still submit to what God arranges and praise His righteousness.

Later on, I read more of Almighty God's words and understood more of the significance of God working in the descendants of Moab. I saw that this is what God's words say. **"To work now on the descendants of Moab is to save those who have fallen into the greatest darkness. Although they were cursed, God is willing to gain glory from them, for they were at first all people whose hearts lacked God; only making those without God in their hearts obey and love Him is true conquest, and the fruit of such work is the most valuable and the most convincing. Only this is gaining glory—this is the glory that God wants to gain in the last days. Although these people are of low position, that they are now able to gain such great salvation is truly an elevation by God. This work is very meaningful, and it is through judgment that He gains these people. It is not His intention to punish these people, but to save them. If, during the last days, He were still doing the work of conquest in Israel,**

it would be worthless; even if it bore fruit, it would not have value or any great significance, and He would not be able to gain all glory. ... Working today on you, the descendants of Moab, is not meant to humiliate you, but to reveal the significance of the work. For you, it is a great elevation. If a person has reason and insight, they will say: ‘I am a descendant of Moab, truly unworthy of receiving today such great elevation by God, or such great blessings. In all I do and say, and according to my status and worth, I am not at all worthy of such great blessings from God. The Israelites have great love for God, and the grace they enjoy is bestowed on them by Him, but their status is much higher than ours. Abraham was very devoted to Jehovah, and Peter was very devoted to Jesus—their devotion was a hundred times greater than ours. Based on our actions, we are absolutely unworthy of enjoying God’s grace’” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Significance of Saving the Descendants of Moab). “The descendants of Moab were cursed, and they were born in this backward country; without a doubt, of all the people under the influence of darkness, the descendants of Moab have the lowest status. Because these people have heretofore been of the lowest status, the work done upon them is best able to shatter human notions, and is also most beneficial to the whole of God’s six-thousand-year management plan. Doing such work among these people is the best way of shattering human notions, and with this God launches an era; with this He shatters all human notions; with this He ends the work of the entire Age of Grace. His first work was carried out in Judea, within the bounds of Israel; among the Gentile nations, He did not do any work to launch the new era. The final stage of work is not only carried out among the Gentiles, but even more so among those who have been cursed. This one point is the evidence most

capable of humiliating Satan, and thus, God ‘becomes’ the God of all creation in the universe, the Lord of all things, the object of worship for everything with life” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God Is the Lord of All Creation). I used to have the notion that God had predetermined who He’d save, that they were His chosen people, so since Chinese people were Moab’s descendants, since we were the lowest of the low, the ones who recognized God least and resisted God most, and we were cursed and rejected by God, He definitely wouldn’t save us. But that’s not what God did at all. He didn’t abandon us because we’re lowly, and He didn’t give up on saving us because we’re filthy and corrupt. Instead, He personally became flesh, bearing enormous humiliation and suffering to come among us, the descendants of Moab, to work, judging, chastising, testing, and refining us time and time again with His words. It was all done to purify and save us. How great God’s love is! It’s just like the Lord Jesus eating at the same table as sinners. The filthier and lowlier we are, the more we see how great God’s love and salvation are. In the end, God will fully save us, the most deeply corrupted, the filthiest and lowliest people, from Satan’s dark forces so we can bear glorious testimony for Him. This is what will most shame Satan. This is the meaning of God’s work in the descendants of Moab! Also, God’s work in the descendants of Moab in the last days has destroyed all of our notions, allowing us to see that not only is He the God of the Israelites, but He’s also the God of all created beings. He doesn’t look at what we’re born into, what country or ethnicity we belong to, whether we’re Israelites or descendants of Moab, and whether we’re blessed or cursed by God. As long as we’re created beings, and as long as we pursue the truth and submit to God’s work, we can be saved by God. God is fair and righteous with every single created being, and everyone has the chance to be saved by Him. The more I pondered God’s words, the more I felt the

great significance of God's work in the descendants of Moab, and how real God's love and salvation for corrupt humanity are. But unfortunately, my caliber is so lacking and my understanding of God's work is limited. I can just share a bit of my feelings and understanding, but I can't give good testimony. I really owe God so much.

Thinking back on it now, going through the trial of being a descendant of Moab, though I suffered a bit at the time, I came to know my own identity and worth. I gained a little understanding of God's work to save mankind and His righteous disposition, and I haven't been so arrogant and self-satisfied since then. I came to feel how lowly and corrupt I am, that I'm not worthy of His love and salvation, and I don't dare make any demands of Him again. No matter how God treats me or what He arranges, I'm willing to accept it and submit. I just want to honestly accept the judgment and chastisement of God's words and seek a change in my life disposition. Even as a descendant of Moab, I still have to pursue the truth and stand witness for God. It's just as the hymn goes, **"We are not the Israelites, but the forsaken descendants of Moab, we are not Peter, whose caliber we are incapable of, nor Job, and we can't even compare to Paul's resolve to suffer for God and dedicate himself to God, and we are so backward, and thus, we are unqualified to enjoy God's blessings. God has still lifted us up today; so we must satisfy God, and although we are of insufficient caliber or qualifications, we are willing to satisfy God—we have this resolve. We are the descendants of Moab, and we were cursed. This was decreed by God, and we are incapable of changing it, but our living out and our knowledge can change, and we are resolved to satisfy God"** (Follow the Lamb and Sing New Songs, The Resolve That the Descendants of Moab Should Have).

5. Gaining Blessing Through Misfortune

By Du Juan, Japan

Almighty God says, **“When one looks back on the road one has walked, when one recollects every phase of one’s journey, one sees that at every step, whether one’s journey was arduous or smooth, God was guiding one’s path, planning it out. It was God’s meticulous arrangements, His careful planning, that led one, unknowingly, to today. To be able to accept the Creator’s sovereignty, to receive His salvation—what great fortune that is! ... When one does not have God, when one cannot see Him, when one cannot clearly recognize God’s sovereignty, every day is meaningless, worthless, miserable. Wherever one is, whatever one’s job is, one’s means of living and the pursuit of one’s goals bring one nothing but endless heartbreak and suffering without relief, such that one cannot bear to look back on one’s past. Only when one accepts the Creator’s sovereignty, submits to His orchestrations and arrangements, and seeks true human life will one gradually begin to break free from all heartbreak and suffering, and to be rid of all the emptiness of life”** (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique III). These words of God really move me as they’re an accurate portrayal of my own life.

I was born into a poor rural family and people have looked down on me all my life. My family was poor, so sometimes I didn’t know where the next meal was coming from, and I always wore my sister’s hand-me-downs. The clothes swam on me. My classmates all made fun of me and didn’t want to associate with me. I had a really painful childhood. Starting then, I resolved: When I’m grown up, I’m definitely going to earn lots of money, live a good life, and no one will look down on me again. Since my family

didn't have any money, I had to drop out of school before I'd finished junior high school to go work in the county pharmaceutical factory. I'd work overtime until 10 at night a lot so I could earn a little more. I later heard that my older sister could earn my monthly wage selling vegetables for five days. I immediately quit my job at the pharmaceutical factory to sell vegetables. After getting married, my husband and I opened a restaurant. I thought I'd make more money running a restaurant, then I could live a grand and dignified life, envied and looked up to by others. But competition was fierce in that business and we only hired one server to save money. I did everything, running between the kitchen and the dining area. Sometimes I was too tired to stay on my feet. Some government officials would come by but they never paid, then there were all sorts of fines and taxes to pay. Sometimes they'd use any excuse to fine us and walk off with a day's earnings. This made me really mad but there's nothing I can do about it in China. I just have to keep my head down. Even working as hard as we did, we didn't make much money. I started to worry after we'd been in business for a while, thinking, "When will I live the good life with lots of money?"

In 2008, a friend told me that in one day's work in Japan, people could earn what they'd get for ten days of work in China. I was overjoyed to hear this. I thought that I'd finally found a good chance to make some money. The intermediary's fees to go to Japan were high, but I thought, "You cannot make an omelet without breaking eggs. As long as we get jobs in Japan, we'll get that money back really fast." My husband and I decided to go to Japan right away to chase that dream. Once there, we had to work 13–14 hours every day. We were dead tired. After work we just wanted to lie down and rest. We didn't want to eat. My lower back hurt all the time and I couldn't afford to see a doctor, so I just took painkillers to help me cope.

Not only was I in pain, but I was being scolded by my boss and bullied by my colleagues. One time, I made a little mistake when I was new to the job. My boss really laid into me and I got so upset I cried. But what else could I do? I just had to stuff my feelings so I could keep making money. I told myself over and over, “It’s hard now, but when I’ve made some money I’ll be able to stand up straight and look people in the eye. I have to hold on.” And so, I kept myself going every day working like a money-making machine. Unexpectedly, by 2015, I had fallen ill with exhaustion from the heavy work. I went to the hospital for a check-up and the doctor told me I had a slipped lumbar disc that was pressing on a nerve, and if I kept working, I’d be bedridden and I wouldn’t be able to look after myself. This struck me like a bolt out of the blue, and I felt weak all over all at once. Things were just looking up in my life and my dream was getting closer. But instead, I ended up injured. I couldn’t accept it, and I thought: “I’m still young. If I just grit my teeth, I’ll be able to get through this. If I don’t earn some money now and I go back to China with empty hands, won’t that be humiliating?” And so, I gritted my teeth and kept dragging my injured body to work. When the pain got bad I just slapped on a medicated patch and struggled on. I worked full days, then the pain was so bad at night I couldn’t sleep. I could hardly even turn over. Just a few days later, I was so unwell I couldn’t even crawl out of bed.

Lying there in bed, I felt so helpless and lonely, and I wondered, “How could I find myself here, at such a young age? Will I really end up bedridden?” I felt a kind of grief that I couldn’t express, and I just had to wonder, “What does man live for after all? Is it really just to make money and stand out? Does money really mean happiness? Is running myself into the ground for money really worth it?” Over nearly thirty years of working myself to the bone, I’d worked in the factory, sold vegetables, run a

restaurant, and come to Japan to work. I had made some money along the way, but there had been so much misery. At first, I thought I'd realize my dream by coming to Japan, that I'd be rich overnight and live an enviable life. But instead, I was stuck in bed, and might even spend the rest of my life in a wheelchair. At that thought, I particularly regretted that I'd run myself down to make some money and be a cut above. I felt aggrieved, miserable, and sad. I couldn't help but cry. I called out within my heart: "Heavens, save me! Why is my life so exhausting, so hard?"

And it was just when I was helpless and in pain that God's salvation of the last days came to me. I met two sisters who believed in God by chance. Through reading God's words with them and listening to their fellowship on the truth, I understood that all things were created by God, God rules the entire universe, everyone's destiny is in God's hands, God has guided and sustained mankind all along, and He always looks after and protects mankind. But I was still confused about something. Our destiny is controlled by God, and God has been leading and protecting us all along, so we should be happy. Then why do we still suffer illness and pain? Why is life so hard? Where does all this pain really come from? I asked the sisters about this.

Sister Qin read some of Almighty God's words for me: **"What is the source of the lifelong suffering from birth, death, illness, and old age that humans endure? What caused people to have these things? Humans did not have them when they were first created, did they? Where, then, did these things come from? They came into being after humans were tempted by Satan and their flesh became degenerate. The pain of human flesh, its afflictions, and its emptiness, as well as the extremely miserable affairs of the human world, only came once Satan had corrupted mankind. After humans were corrupted by Satan, it**

began to torment them. As a result, they became more and more degenerate. The diseases of humanity grew more and more acute, and their suffering became more and more severe. Increasingly, people sensed the emptiness and tragedy of the human world, as well as their inability to go on living there, and they felt less and less hope for the world. Thus, this suffering was brought down upon humans by Satan”

((The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The Significance of God’s Tasting of Worldly Suffering). She then shared this fellowship: “When God created man, they were accompanied, cared for, and protected by God. There was no birth, aging, illness or death, and no worries or annoyances. Man lived free of cares in the Garden of Eden, enjoying all things that could be enjoyed bestowed by God. They lived happily and joyfully under God’s guidance. But then man was deceived and corrupted by Satan. They believed its lies, sinned and betrayed God, and so lost God’s care and protection. We’ve lived under Satan’s domain ever since and have fallen into darkness. We live lives of toil, worry, pain and sorrow. For thousands of years, Satan has consistently used heresies and fallacies like materialism, atheism, and evolution, and maxims spread by famous and great figures to mislead and harm people, like ‘There is no God in the world,’ ‘One’s destiny is in his own hand,’ ‘Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost,’ ‘Stand out above the rest, and bring honor to your ancestors,’ and ‘Man will do anything to get rich,’ ‘Money makes the world go round,’ and so on. After accepting these satanic fallacies, people have denied God’s existence and rule, distancing themselves from God and betraying Him. They have become more arrogant and conceited, more selfish, crafty, and malicious. People engage in intrigue, fight, and kill for the sake of fame, status and wealth. Husbands and wives, friends cheat and betray each other, even fathers and sons turn on each other and brothers attack one another. We’ve

totally lost our normal humanity and live more like beasts than humans. Satan's fallacies have harmed so many people. Thinking they can control or change it, they fight against their own fate. They fight all their lives, and they not only fail to change their fates, but ruin themselves in the attempt. Mankind's been misled and corrupted by Satan. We toil all day, tormented in body and mind. All sorts of illnesses and suffering are on the rise. These sufferings and anxieties make us feel that man's life in this world is too hard and tiring. This all comes about after Satan corrupted man, it is Satan harming us, and it is also the bitter fruit of mankind denying God and betraying God."

Sister Qin's fellowship showed me that man's illnesses came from Satan. After Satan corrupted man, we lost God's care and protection, developing all sorts of illness and pain. The sister then said this: "God can't bear seeing mankind toyed with and afflicted by Satan. He's incarnated twice to redeem and save mankind. The first time, He was incarnated as the Lord Jesus, crucified as a sin offering for mankind, to redeem us from sin. By believing in the Lord Jesus, our sins are forgiven but our sinful nature remains and we still aren't completely free of sin. God has once again incarnated amongst man in the last days to express the truth and do the work of judgment and cleansing so that we can be fully saved from Satan, cast off sin, and be cleansed, until finally we're led into God's kingdom. By reading more of God's words we can understand the truth and have discernment. We'll understand just how Satan corrupts man and see through to its evil essence. We can then reject Satan and escape its influence, then it can't toy with or harm us anymore." I was thrilled to hear that God had personally come to save us. I really didn't want Satan to go on harming me like that, but I didn't quite get exactly how it was harming me, so I asked

the sisters: “I’ve worked so hard to be a cut above the rest and stand out, but it’s left me in unbearable pain. Is it Satan that’s done this to me?”

Sister Zhang then read some of Almighty God’s words related to my question. **“Satan uses a very subtle kind of method, a method very much in concert with people’s notions, which is not at all radical, through which it causes people to unknowingly accept its way of living, its rules to live by, and to establish life goals and their direction in life, and in doing so they also unknowingly come to have ambitions in life. No matter how grand these life ambitions may seem, they are inextricably linked to ‘fame’ and ‘gain.’ Everything that any great or famous person—all people, in fact—follow in life relates only to these two words: ‘fame’ and ‘gain.’ People think that once they have fame and gain, they can then capitalize on those things to enjoy high status and great wealth, and to enjoy life. They think fame and gain are a kind of capital that they can use to obtain a life of pleasure-seeking and wanton enjoyment of the flesh. For the sake of this fame and gain which mankind so covets, people willingly, albeit unknowingly, hand over their bodies, minds, all that they have, their futures and their destinies, to Satan. They do so without even a moment’s hesitation, ever ignorant of the need to recover all that they have handed over. Can people retain any control over themselves once they have taken refuge in Satan in this way and become loyal to it? Certainly not. They are completely and utterly controlled by Satan. They have completely and utterly sunk into a quagmire, and are unable to free themselves. Once someone is mired in fame and gain, they no longer seek that which is bright, that which is righteous, or those things that are beautiful and good. This is because the seductive power that fame and gain have over people is too great; they become things for people to pursue throughout their lives**

and even for all eternity without end. Is this not true?” (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique VI). **“Satan uses fame and gain to control man’s thoughts, until all people can think of is fame and gain. They struggle for fame and gain, suffer hardships for fame and gain, endure humiliation for fame and gain, sacrifice everything they have for fame and gain, and they will make any judgment or decision for the sake of fame and gain. In this way, Satan binds people with invisible shackles, and they have neither the strength nor the courage to throw them off. They unknowingly bear these shackles and trudge ever onward with great difficulty”** (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique VI).

After reading God’s words, she fellowshiped on the truth of how Satan uses fame and gain to corrupt man. Only then did I realize how hateful Satan is! Satan uses formal education and social influences to indoctrinate us with its rules for life, like “No pain, no gain,” “If you want to appear dignified when people are looking, you have to suffer when they aren’t,” and “Money makes the world go round.” Deceived by these life rules, people feel they can’t live without money, that once they get rich, others will look up to them and they’ll have dignity, and that being poor means being worth less. That’s why people struggle all their lives for money, fame and gain, and even go to any lengths to achieve them, regardless of the consequences. People become more corrupt and their lives become more painful. This is the shackle Satan uses to bind us, and it is also Satan’s ruse for corrupting us. Striving to be a cut above the rest, to earn more money so that others would think highly of me, I’d become a money-making machine. My desires grew, I was never satisfied, and I was forced to stop only when I’d ruined my own health. I’d become a slave to money, fame and gain. The pursuit of fame and gain had really made my life so hard, so exhausting! Seeking that all those years, I’d been overwhelmed by pain and ended up

injured. All that suffering came from being harmed and corrupted by Satan! Without the revelations of God's words, I'd never have known Satan uses money, fame and gain to corrupt people, much less that fame and gain are Satan's shackle on man.

Sister Qin came to fellowship with me a lot after that. Over time, I started to see the tactics Satan uses to corrupt man. I also came to understand what was most important: reading God's words, pursuing the truth, and obeying God's rule and arrangements. That's the most meaningful, happy way to live, and the only way that God commends!

One day, I found out that I had a colleague who had come to Japan with her husband to go all out to make money. Although they'd earned some money, her husband's health later suffered and he had to return to China for treatment. He ended up diagnosed with late-stage cancer. Their family lived in terror and sorrow. Through her misfortune, I deeply felt our fragility and the preciousness of life. Without life, what good is more money? Can money buy life? Afterward, I read this in Almighty God's word: **"People spend their lives chasing after money and fame; they clutch at these straws, thinking they are their only means of support, as if by having them they could live on, exempt from death. But only when they are about to die do they realize how distant these things are from them, how weak they are in the face of death, how easily they shatter, how lonely and helpless they are, with nowhere to turn. They realize that life cannot be bought with money or fame, that no matter how wealthy a person may be, no matter how lofty their position, all are equally poor and insignificant in the face of death. They realize that money cannot buy life, that fame cannot erase death, that neither money nor fame can lengthen a person's life by a single minute, a single second"** (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique III). God's words

allowed me to better see that if we don't believe in God or understand the truth, we can't see through Satan's schemes, and we can't see that Satan uses money and fame to corrupt people. We're sucked into this whirlpool that we can't get out of. We're fooled and harmed by Satan in spite of ourselves, and even ruin our own lives. It's so tragic. Thanks to my faith and reading so many of God's words, I've finally come to understand these things. If I didn't have faith or read God's words, I never could have cast off Satan's corruption. I'd just be struggling in darkness and pain with no way out.

While I was injured, sisters from the church checked on me a lot and helped ease my pain. They also did housework and looked after me like I was their own family. Out in a foreign country, I was so deeply moved by how attentively the sisters cared for me. I felt even more grateful to Almighty God. With God's care and protection, I was better before I knew it.

I read this in Almighty God's word later: **"When one looks back on the road one has walked, when one recollects every phase of one's journey, one sees that at every step, whether one's journey was arduous or smooth, God was guiding one's path, planning it out. It was God's meticulous arrangements, His careful planning, that led one, unknowingly, to today. To be able to accept the Creator's sovereignty, to receive His salvation—what great fortune that is! If a person has a negative attitude toward fate, it proves that they are resisting everything that God has arranged for them, that they do not have a submissive attitude. If one has a positive attitude toward God's sovereignty over human fate, then when one looks back upon one's journey, when one truly comes to grips with God's sovereignty, one will more earnestly desire to submit to everything that God has arranged,**

will have more determination and confidence to let God orchestrate one's fate and to stop rebelling against God. For one sees that when one does not comprehend fate, when one does not understand God's sovereignty, when one gropes their way forward willfully, staggering and tottering through the fog, the journey is too difficult, too heartbreaking. So when people recognize God's sovereignty over human fate, the clever ones choose to know it and accept it, to bid farewell to the painful days when they tried to build a good life with their own two hands, and to stop struggling against fate and pursuing their so-called 'life goals' in their own way. When one does not have God, when one cannot see Him, when one cannot clearly recognize God's sovereignty, every day is meaningless, worthless, miserable. Wherever one is, whatever one's job is, one's means of living and the pursuit of one's goals bring one nothing but endless heartbreak and suffering without relief, such that one cannot bear to look back on one's past. Only when one accepts the Creator's sovereignty, submits to His orchestrations and arrangements, and seeks true human life will one gradually begin to break free from all heartbreak and suffering, and to be rid of all the emptiness of life" (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique III). The word of God is so practical, each sentence speaks to the bottom of my heart. I understand from God's word that God is the Creator and we are His creatures. Every person's life is in God's hands, under His control and arrangement. Everything we get in life is under God's control and is preordained by Him. Rushing about here and there is certainly not a deciding factor. However much God bestows on us is how much we get. If God doesn't bestow something on us, no matter how much we work it'll be in vain. It is just like the sayings "Man plants the seed, but Heaven decides the harvest" and "Man proposes, God disposes." We should submit to the

Creator's rule and arrangements in our lives. This is the secret to happiness in life! I also realized that money and position are worldly possessions. By devoting ourselves to the pursuit of fame and gain, all we get in the end is emptiness and pain. Ultimately we're consumed by Satan. I thought back on how I'd lived by satanic philosophies like "No pain, no gain," and I'd pursued money and fame. I thought that I could have a happy life, and be thought highly of and envied by others, but I hadn't expected that what I would obtain instead was pain and bitterness, I didn't have any peace or happiness. Now that I've read God's words, I understand God's will. I don't want to fight my destiny anymore, and I really don't want to pursue fame and gain. That's not the life I want anymore. I resolved to take on a different way of life, and all I wanted was to put the rest of my life into God's hands for Him to arrange, to strive to obey God and perform my duty.

To make more time for my faith and to attend gatherings, I gave up my old job and got a new, easier job. I often read the word of God when I'm not at work, and the more I read the more my heart is brightened. I've also learned the source of man's sinning, I understand how God saves mankind step by step, what man should live for, and how he should live a meaningful life. I get together with brothers and sisters often to share our experiences and learn to sing hymns of God's words. My life is so happy now. I don't earn as much as I used to, but I feel a sense of peace and stability I never had before. Looking back on it now, I gained blessing through misfortune! This truly is His salvation for me.

6. Fame and Fortune Have Brought Me Suffering

By Tian Tian, China

One spring, some senior doctors and I went out for an outdoor cookout. On the way, some local villagers recognized Dr. Wang. They looked so happy and grateful. They greeted her warmly. Then when we were cooking, we realized we were lacking some stuff. The villagers were incredibly kind. When they saw we needed something, they would offer up their own to us. Some daily necessities were in short supply in those days and so quite valuable. There wasn't much milk for example. Many people had to wait in line to get it. But the people from the dairy factory just brought it right to us. This was all because of Dr. Wang's reputation. I saw Dr. Wang's eyes squint up as she smiled and I couldn't help but envy her and think: "People really do think highly of Dr. Wang! They respect her wherever she goes and she doesn't have to worry about anything. She just has to show her face to get things done easily. But as for me, I'm just a clinician whom nobody knows. I can't get treated like that. I can only hang on to her coattails." But then, in my disappointment, I looked at Dr. Wang's silver hair and thought: "Am I not still young? If I study medicine properly, learn from the veteran doctors, and work hard, sooner or later I can be famous and respected like them."

Then, after a month of continuous effort, I was able to be on duty by myself and I also had a chance to practice surgery. But this was only the first step. I still had to work harder. So then I was constantly studying medical theories. I took a skills exam and took all kinds of remedial classes outside work. If there was an emergency operation, whether during work time or not, I'd never pass up the chance to practice surgery. Sometimes when I was busy operating, I'd be so hungry but I couldn't care for my own

body because there's no room for mistakes in surgery. Sometimes I even needed to work for a full 24 hours. After getting off work, my head was out of it and my body felt exhausted. I'd be desperate to have a rest, but then I'd remember my father always telling me, "No pain, no gain," and stories about working hard to achieve one's goals. So I encouraged myself to keep going and forced myself to keep working hard. As soon as I got home at night, my head would hit the pillow. I'd stretch out and relax my exhausted, aching body. When I closed my eyes, wanting to sleep, every detail of an operation would flash into my mind. I was afraid my flagging mental state would cause me to make a mistake in surgery. I would think of old colleagues who made small errors at work and never again had the right to operate. If something went wrong, I'd never be a success. I'd then instantly feel stressed, tired, frightened and worried. My mind and body were so very tired. Sometimes I'd think of the elective surgery scheduled for the next day and no matter how late it was when I got home, I would have to repeatedly check and revise the medical knowledge I needed for that operation the next day so that I wouldn't make any mistakes. I was very tired, but I would urge myself on so that I could make it some day: "Work hard! There's light at the end of the tunnel!"

Eventually, after seven years of hard work and persistence, I became a certified doctor. At that moment, the most prominent words in my mind were: It was all worth it! When my rank went up, the price to see me went up. I would do all the operations that could be done at a certified doctor level and my name was in the list of chief surgeons. My salary and my status went up while my colleagues lagged behind. I felt a happiness that's hard to put into words, especially on busy streets, where some people would recognize me. I wouldn't know them, but they knew me. They'd even compliment me on being a good surgeon. The look of admiration patients

gave me and the things they said: “I came to see you before and I got better soon after for not much money, but my other doctor treated me for ages without any improvement.” And some people said: “So-and-so said you’re a good doctor. She recommended that I come see you. It’s really difficult to get in to see you nowadays.” When I’d hear this stuff, I’d be smiling from ear to ear. I’d feel so happy inside. People still remembered these things after so long and others even came to me because I was well-known. I suddenly felt like my reputation had grown and now I knew the taste of success. But after the happiness, I thought about how far away I was from being an attending physician. I could only do normal operations. If I was an attending physician and could do higher-level operations, the patients would admire me even more and even more people would want to see me. Wouldn’t my status in their eyes get even higher?

After that, I quickened my pace toward fame and fortune. My husband complained and argued with me a lot, saying I was spending less and less time with him. I felt tired and very wronged, and I couldn’t help asking myself over and over: “What did I put in that effort for? Was it not to have a successful career and a good life? Have I done something wrong? I haven’t. It’s my husband who’s being unreasonable. He has no ambition.” I wiped away the tears and applied for a chance to go to a municipal level medical unit for further study to further improve my medical skills and become an attending physician. It was a rare opportunity and I cherished it. But during the training, I was surprised to find out I was pregnant. Finding myself pregnant left me feeling at a loss and I really didn’t think it was the right time to have a child. I’d gone through so much to get this chance, I couldn’t just give it up because of a child and ruin my prospects. But then I thought of the baby. I didn’t want an abortion. Later, because I was standing for long periods doing operations and working too much, and I was skipping

meals to do unscheduled operations, I ended up having a miscarriage. But I never stopped my pursuit of fame and fortune for one moment. I wanted to go back to work at the hospital the day after having the fetus removed, but my body was so weak that day. I felt my body was falling apart. My stomach hurt and my limbs were weak. All I could do was lie in bed and rest. But I wasn't thinking of the miscarried child, or how to look after my own body, I was just worried about my study time being delayed and that it might affect my graduation. Had it all been for nothing?

After another seven years of exhausting work, I finally got that position as attending physician I'd been dreaming of. The patients I'd seen all greeted me when they saw me and said to those around them, "Dr. Tian operated on me and saved me." Some visited me at home bringing all kinds of local specialties. Some brought me gifts and shopping vouchers to express their gratitude. Sometimes, I'd be eating at a restaurant and when they saw me, they'd pay my bill without me knowing. Even though all this made people envious, my happiness was only ever temporary. No one knew about the hardship and pain behind my happiness. I can't make the slightest mistake in an operation, or the consequences would be unthinkable, and I worried all the time about making a mistake that would ruin me. I was very cautious, like walking on a knife edge. I'd been under too much stress, and my mind couldn't take it. My health had suffered and my weight was down to about 90 pounds. By overworking for long periods, my health had deteriorated so that I was tormented by insomnia, stomach pain and an inflamed gallbladder. I couldn't eat, I couldn't sleep. I'd count sheep all night and take up to 4 sleeping pills, but it was no use. During the day I was in a daze and had no energy. My legs felt like they were made of lead. It was unbearably hard. I couldn't help but smile bitterly and think: "I've got the status and the admiration of others, but now I can't even sleep or eat like

a normal person.” I even wanted to avoid work, avoid everything, and just have a good sleep, but that had become pie in the sky. What made it worse was that when I most needed care and looking after, my husband was out drinking and enjoying himself and I just had to bear my sadness on my own. I felt miserable and helpless on those still nights. Sleep was hard to come by and I often dreamt I was fumbling around in the dark, unable to see the direction I was headed in or the way home. I felt frightened and I struggled. One time, I woke up with a start, crying “Ah!” There was sweat on my forehead. I switched on the light and sat on the edge of the bed and thought of the respect from patients and praise from my family, but that didn’t ease the pain at all. Thinking back to the effort I’d put in over the years, I kept asking myself: “I’ve worked hard half my life to get ahead but in the end, apart from those short moments of glory, all I’ve got is a sick body, a betraying husband and endless suffering and pain. Why is that? How should a person live to have a meaningful and worthwhile life?” I really wanted to break away from the pain. I saw a fortune teller, I searched for answers in quotes by famous people and dabbled with “positive energy” that people seek so much. I went online to try and find answers in Buddhism, but there were no satisfactory answers and they didn’t solve my problems at all. Right when my illnesses were becoming unbearably painful, when I couldn’t see hope in life or find the way forward, the saving grace of Almighty God came to me.

After finding faith in God, I found the answers in God’s words. God’s words say: **“People think that once they have fame and gain, they can then capitalize on those things to enjoy high status and great wealth, and to enjoy life. They think fame and gain are a kind of capital that they can use to obtain a life of pleasure-seeking and wanton enjoyment of the flesh. For the sake of this fame and gain which mankind so**

covets, people willingly, albeit unknowingly, hand over their bodies, minds, all that they have, their futures and their destinies, to Satan. They do so without even a moment's hesitation, ever ignorant of the need to recover all that they have handed over. Can people retain any control over themselves once they have taken refuge in Satan in this way and become loyal to it? Certainly not. They are completely and utterly controlled by Satan. They have completely and utterly sunk into a quagmire, and are unable to free themselves. Once someone is mired in fame and gain, they no longer seek that which is bright, that which is righteous, or those things that are beautiful and good. This is because the seductive power that fame and gain have over people is too great; they become things for people to pursue throughout their lives and even for all eternity without end. Is this not true?" (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique VI). God's words brightened my heart. I remembered going on that cookout with Dr. Wang when I determined in my heart that as long as I had status, and a high level of medical skills, then people would respect me and I'd receive special treatment and life would go smoothly. I'd also accepted satanic poisons like "A man leaves his name behind wherever he stays, just as a goose utters its cry wherever it flies," "Stand out above the rest," and "Man struggles upwards; water flows downwards," so much so that chasing fame and fortune had become my pursuit and objectives in life. I was constantly working hard to further my career. After I'd gained respect and praise from people around me, I felt a real sense of success, which kept me on the wrong path, without so much as a backwards glance. I spent more than 10 of my best years chasing fame and fortune, sacrificing my family and the child in my belly. I'd ruined my health and was left with a sick body. It's just a shame that after all that sacrifice, only then did I think: "What use is fame and fortune to me?"

Chasing it has brought me tiredness and suffering, and after finally attaining it, I'm still suffering beyond words. Clearly, chasing fame and fortune is the wrong path after all." I finally understood that fighting to chase fame and fortune was an evil force that wraps around people like a rope and suffocates them. It was like a yoke Satan had placed over my body that made me willing to suffer and sacrifice everything. Eventually, Satan had me right where it wanted me. It's just as God's words say: **"Satan uses fame and gain to control man's thoughts, until all people can think of is fame and gain. They struggle for fame and gain, suffer hardships for fame and gain, endure humiliation for fame and gain, sacrifice everything they have for fame and gain, and they will make any judgment or decision for the sake of fame and gain. In this way, Satan binds people with invisible shackles, and they have neither the strength nor the courage to throw them off. They unknowingly bear these shackles and trudge ever onward with great difficulty. For the sake of this fame and gain, mankind shuns God and betrays Him and becomes increasingly wicked. In this way, therefore, one generation after another is destroyed in the midst of Satan's fame and gain"** (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique VI). I saw how truly hateful Satan is and I thanked God from the bottom of my heart. Right when Satan had driven me into a corner, God didn't just sit and watch, He held out His hand of salvation to me, comforted me with His words, encouraged me and helped me find the source of my pain. Only God loves people the most. He became flesh to express the truth to teach us to discern good from evil and the positive from the negative. I knew I couldn't continue on the wrong path, spending my life chasing fame and gain. I should worship the Creator. After that, I spent more of my free time reading God's words and fellowshiping with my brothers and sisters on things I didn't understand, and we helped

and supported one another. Before I knew it, I understood some truths and had a better grasp on some things. My mind was much more relaxed. Slowly, my insomnia improved, and my stomachaches and inflamed gallbladder went away, too. These were things I couldn't have achieved chasing fame and gain. I truly experienced the happiness of spiritual freedom.

Later on, I saw all my colleagues were working toward getting promoted and those with lower professional skills than me, some of whom were even colleagues I'd trained, all became assistant professors. I felt a sense of loss. I thought if my health hadn't broken down and set me back a decade or so, given my expert skills, I could have at least been an assistant professor. But thinking back to how I used to chase promotions and got a sick body, pain and suffering, I realized that this was one of Satan's cunning schemes. Satan was using my desires to seduce me back into the whirlpool of fame and gain. If I started after fame and gain again, I could end up losing even my life. What would be the point? I thought of something the Lord Jesus said: **"For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"** (Matthew 16:26). And Almighty God says: **"As someone who is normal, and who pursues the love of God, entry into the kingdom to become one of the people of God is your true future, and a life that is of the utmost value and significance; no one is more blessed than you. Why do I say this? Because those who do not believe in God live for the flesh, and they live for Satan, but today you live for God, and live to do the will of God. That is why I say your lives are of the utmost significance"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Know God's Newest Work and Follow His Footsteps). I understood God's will from His words. No matter how high a person's status or what their reputation is, chasing fame and

fortune is the wrong path and it's a path that leads to death. We cannot receive God's blessing or protection going down this path. It is only by pursuing the truth and performing our duty, ridding ourselves of our corruptions by experiencing God's work and trying to know God that we can have a life of significance and value and eventually receive God's blessing. This is the only real future a person should have. If I kept trying to satisfy the interests of the flesh, not only would God not bless me, He would actually hate me. Here are some real-life examples of people I knew: My boss's daughter graduated from college and had a good career living abroad. But after years of cut-throat competition and being overly stressed, she got depressed and jumped off a building, killing herself. And a son of my friend, who became a manager at a young age and achieved success, developed cirrhosis of the liver from too much social drinking. He died not even six months later and my friend's hair turned gray overnight from the pain it caused. I recall once reading these words of God: **"People realize that money cannot buy life, that fame cannot erase death, that neither money nor fame can lengthen a person's life by a single minute, a single second"** (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique III). Fame and gain cannot rid people of suffering and cannot save their lives. They can only lure people back to the abyss of death after some short-lived happiness. Having understood this, never again would I be disturbed or affected by people around me. I became willing to spend my limited time on pursuing the truth and knowing God, living according to God's requirements and carrying out my duty in God's house.

One day, I received a call from the director of another hospital. He said, "Now you're retired, so we're planning a banquet for you to celebrate and we can talk about that collaboration we talked about before. We'd like to hang up your attending physician license in our hospital to attract your

former patients. You could also work for us, or you could become a shareholder. It's up to you." When I heard this, I couldn't help but think, "I've spent most of my life chasing fame and gain and what did I get for it? Am I really going to spend my whole life buried in fame and gain? It wasn't easy casting off the pain of chasing fame and fortune. I don't need to count any more sheep at night, or live with worry and fear all day. I've tasted the peace of mind that believing in God and understanding the truth have brought me. I'd better grab on tightly to this happiness. Besides, even though I just needed to hang my license up at the hospital, if there was a problem I'd still need to go in, and wouldn't that interfere with carrying out my duty?" I thought of the words of Almighty God: **"Right now, each day you live through is crucial, and it is of the utmost importance to your destination and your fate, so you must cherish everything you have today, and treasure each minute that passes. You must carve out as much time as you can to give yourselves the greatest gains so that you will not have lived this life in vain"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. To Whom Are You Loyal?). I was so fortunate to have the rare opportunity to find God. It was God who made me understand the meaning of life, and brought me out from the abyss of pain. How could I ever go back to Satan's embrace? God's work was nearing its end and I hadn't gained the truth yet. I had to cherish every day and pursue the truth in my limited time. That's what a beautiful life is! Having understood the will of God, I declined the director's offer. The moment I put the phone down, I felt freer than I ever had before. I couldn't help but say, "I should have stopped chasing fame and gain a long time ago." Other hospitals talked with me about working together, and I declined all of them. Right now, I'm invested in carrying out my duty. I feel so at ease and satisfied every day. This is something that no

material enjoyment or fame or status could bring. I thank Almighty God for saving me!

7. The Awakening of a Money Slave

By Xingwu, China

When I was young, my family was poor, and my parents couldn't afford my tuition, so I made and sold fences to pay for school. One time, I was doing farm work and cut my little finger. There was no money for treatment, so it never fully healed. I still can't fully extend it. After I married, my husband and I were still poor. Our friends and relatives looked down on us and avoided us. When I saw the respect that rich people got, how they could feed and clothe themselves without anxiety, I envied them. People always say: "Money makes the world go round," "Money isn't everything, but without it, you can do nothing," and "He who pays the piper calls the tune." Back then, I thought that all this was true. With money, you can feed and clothe yourself, and it brings you respect and admiration. I thought that money was everything. I swore to work hard and earn more money. I wanted to escape poverty, and live like a rich person.

Later, my husband and I were hired to run a school cafeteria. Hundreds of people ate there every day. To save money, we only hired one other worker. My husband and I worked from 4 a.m. to after midnight every day. I kept working even when I had a bad cold. To earn more, we also took on a lot of farm work. During the busy seasons, we worked overtime to plant and harvest everything at night. Because we were working day and night, I often had dizzy spells. Sometimes, I'd nod off while chopping vegetables, and I'd cut my hands. The cuts would get covered in salt and water. It was so painful. Even though I was so tired, every time I saw my earnings go up, I felt happy. I felt that it was all worth it. And when I saw those rich people in their fancy clothes eating and laughing, I told myself, "I must make more

money!” I thought that as long as I worked hard, I’d join the ranks of the rich sooner or later.

Because of using cold water every day, I got serious rheumatoid arthritis. My joints began to deform. And because of long years of tiring work, I slipped a disc in my spine, which led to bone hyperplasia and sciatica. The doctor ordered surgery, and a three-month hospital stay, but I didn’t want to stop earning money, so I refused. Even three days would have been too long. So, I continued working day and night. In the end, because I could never eat on time or get enough sleep, I got gastroptosis and gastroenteritis. Soon after, I developed uterine myomas, ovarian prolapse, heart disease, myocarditis, and severe anemia. It was just one illness after another. The pain was too much to bear, and I couldn’t sleep at night. I shed more tears than I could count. I was at a loss. I thought: “What’s the point of living? Is it just so we can spend our lives struggling to earn money?” I didn’t have an answer. I just felt like I had to have money to achieve anything in society. So, I told myself: “As long as you’re upright, then you can keep working.” And just like that, I went back to pursuing money. But one day I went to the hospital, and was diagnosed with two forms of cancer—early-stage lung cancer and breast cancer. When they told me this, out of the blue, I felt weak. I lay on my bed and cried for hours. I went to all kinds of hospitals for treatment and spent nearly all our savings. But nothing worked, and the medicine I took caused swelling all over my body. Every night, when all was quiet, I lay in my bed and stared out the window, in a state of despair. I’d spent my life earning money, and besides not being rich, my health was ruined, and my life was miserable. What was the point in living? I didn’t want to kill myself trying to earn money anymore. But my husband loved money. He said: “As long as you’re alive, you keep working!” His indifference made me feel upset and disappointed, but

mostly just helpless. I was only in my 40s. I'd never had a happy life. I hadn't seen my son get married. I wasn't ready to die like that. I wanted to live. But without money, how was I going to get treatment and survive? The only way was to keep earning money. So, I carried on working while I took medication.

A year later, my husband opened a coal briquette plant with the rest of our savings. The next year, he opened an oil extraction plant. Every day, I went between the two plants in spite of illness, doing odd jobs. After years of hard work, we finally made some money. We bought a house in the city, a car, and we enjoyed a good material life. Our friends and relatives fawned on us and admired us. Our social standing changed. We had a new identity. We were very pleased with ourselves. All those years of suffering finally seemed worthwhile. But good times don't last. After so many years of hard work, my body started to break down. The doctor told me: "Your illnesses are too complex. None of your organs are working properly. There's nothing we can do." His words came like a death sentence. I couldn't accept this news. Was I supposed to go home and wait to die? I had money and was enjoying my material life. But what use was that? No amount of money could save me now. The pain of disease almost made me want to die. What else could I do? In spite of myself, I looked up and cried: "Heavens! Save me!"

At my most desperate moment, my friend shared Almighty God's gospel of the last days with me. She said that God has become flesh in the last days to save mankind, express the truth, and uncover life's mysteries. He reveals the source of evil and darkness in the world, why our lives are so empty and so full of suffering, where sicknesses come from, in whose hands our fate is held, what can truly give our lives meaning, and more. What's more, she said that by reading His words and understanding the truth, we

can see through to these things, then our suffering will alleviate. My friend read a passage of Almighty God's words to me, **"What is the source of the lifelong suffering from birth, death, illness, and old age that humans endure? What caused people to have these things? Humans did not have them when they were first created, did they? Where, then, did these things come from? They came into being after humans were tempted by Satan and their flesh became degenerate. The pain of human flesh, its afflictions, and its emptiness, as well as the extremely miserable affairs of the human world, only came once Satan had corrupted mankind. After humans were corrupted by Satan, it began to torment them. As a result, they became more and more degenerate. The diseases of humanity grew more and more acute, and their suffering became more and more severe. Increasingly, people sensed the emptiness and tragedy of the human world, as well as their inability to go on living there, and they felt less and less hope for the world. Thus, this suffering was brought down upon humans by Satan"** ((The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The Significance of God's Tasting of Worldly Suffering).

My friend then said in fellowship: "When God made us, we all lived under His protection, living freely in the Garden of Eden, without death, disease, or worries. But when Satan tempted and corrupted humanity, we betrayed God and lost His care and protection. We live in Satan's domain, according to Satan's principles. We compete with one another, lying, cheating and fighting, for fame, and wealth, and status. This is where sickness and the pain and sorrow in our spirits come from. And this suffering, these worries, make everyone feel that life is too painful, too exhausting, or too hard. All this has come about because Satan has corrupted us. This is Satan tormenting us. But God has come to the world in

the flesh in order to save us. He expresses all truths that enable us to attain salvation and be purified. If we read God's words and live by them, we can obtain His protection and guidance, rid ourselves of corruption and attain God's salvation, and be brought by Him into our final destination." Hearing her words, I felt a kind of hope. I felt that Almighty God could save me from suffering, so I agreed to look into Almighty God's work. My friend gave me a copy of *The Word Appears in the Flesh*. After that, I read God's words every day, and met with my brothers and sisters.

During my devotionals one day, I watched a video of a reading of God's words. Almighty God says, **"Whatever your background, and whatever the journey ahead of you, no one can escape the orchestrations and arrangements of the Heaven, and no one is in control of their own destiny, for only He who rules over all things is capable of such work. Since the day man came into existence, God has ever worked thus, managing the universe, directing the rules of change for all things and the trajectory of their movement. Like all things, man is quietly and unknowingly nourished by the sweetness and rain and dew from God; like all things, man unknowingly lives beneath the orchestration of God's hand. Man's heart and spirit are held in the hand of God, everything of his life is beheld in the eyes of God. Regardless of whether or not you believe this, any and all things, whether living or dead, will shift, change, renew, and disappear in accordance with God's thoughts. Such is the way in which God presides over all things"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God Is the Source of Man's Life). When I watched this video, I saw that God is our Creator and He rules over everything. God supplies and nourishes all of humanity. Our destiny, our life and death, and our happiness rests in the palm of His hand. We can't change them just by keeping busy and rushing about. But I didn't

understand God's sovereignty. I had tried relying on my own strength to change my destiny, trying to become wealthy. But even though I earned a bit of money, I never felt happy. My soul was in pain, and my health was ruined. That's when I realized: If people don't believe in and worship God, and if they don't obey His sovereignty, and if they resist their fate out of desire, they will only suffer in vain, and will go to hell after they die. I knew then that God was my only true support, and I prayed and entrusted my health to Him. Whether I lived or died, I would submit to God's sovereignty.

I joined in with the church life often after that. I saw how my brothers and sisters read God's words and pursued the truth, seeking to do their duty and please God, and I really admired them. I wanted to break free from my old life, and live anew. So I prayed to God often, asking God to give me a way out so I would have more time to attend gatherings and do my duty. Later, our oil extraction plant was requisitioned to build a new road. I didn't need to go back and forth between the two plants like before. I had more time to meet with others and fellowship God's word, to contemplate God's word, and to get closer to God. I felt enriched every day. A while after that, my health began to get much better. I felt energized, and my body felt stronger. I felt much more relaxed and at ease. I was so grateful to God.

Later, I watched another video of a reading of God's words. Almighty God says, **“‘Money makes the world go round’ is a philosophy of Satan, and it prevails among the whole of mankind, in every human society. You could say that it is a trend because it has been instilled in the heart of every single person. From the very beginning, people did not accept this saying, but then they gave it tacit acceptance when they came into contact with real life, and began to feel that these words were in fact true. Is this not a process of Satan corrupting man? ... So after Satan**

uses this trend to corrupt people, how is it manifested in them? Do you feel that you could not survive in this world without any money, that even one day without money would be impossible? People's status is based on how much money they have, as is the respect they command. The backs of the poor are bent in shame, while the rich enjoy their high status. They stand tall and proud, speaking loudly and living arrogantly. What does this saying and trend bring to people? Is it not true that many people make any sacrifice in the pursuit of money? Do many people not lose their dignity and integrity in the pursuit of more money? Moreover, do many people not lose the opportunity to perform their duty and follow God for the sake of money? Is this not a loss for people? (Yes.) Is Satan not sinister to use this method and this saying to corrupt man to such a degree? Is this not a malicious trick?" (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique V). After watching this, I understood that these decades I had spent in pain and exhaustion was because Satan's corruption and society's influence had led me to follow worldly trends and worship money. During my childhood, living in poverty, I had been excluded and looked down on. When I saw rich people, who lived well and inspired respect, I felt sure that you needed money to live in this world. "Money isn't everything, but without it, you can do nothing," "Money makes the world go round," "He who pays the piper calls the tune," "Money is first," and "Man will do anything to get rich." These satanic fallacies took root in my heart and controlled my thoughts. I thought that money was everything, that it could make me admired, respected, and happy. I made money my only goal, and only cared about earning more. I didn't care if I felt dizzy or if I was tired, or sick, and my body couldn't take it. When I thought about becoming wealthy, and living a rich person's life, I just gritted my teeth and carried on. Even when I got cancer, it

changed nothing. In fact, it made money even more important, because I needed it to get treatment and survive. Even then, I didn't stop trying to earn money. I'd become firmly bound by Satan, and was nothing but a slave to money. Even though I had a car, a house, and some money, and was held in respect and admiration, I didn't feel happy at all. I had many diseases, and also had cancer. My money couldn't alleviate my pain, and it couldn't save my life. I felt great pain and despair. More money would have been of no use. Before, I had traded my life for money. Now I was buying my life with it. I had lived to make money, but I had come up empty-handed. I saw clearly, then, that pursuing money was the wrong way to live. Money is a trick that Satan uses to harm and corrupt us. It's a yoke Satan places around our necks. If it weren't for God's word, even now I wouldn't have seen how Satan uses money to tie us up, to control us, and hurt us, and Satan would still be leading me by the nose, tormenting and toying with me. I saw that people didn't understand the truth, so they didn't know how to live. They just followed the crowd, putting money first. It's such a shame. I was so lucky to hear God's voice, to go before Him and escape Satan's abuse. This was God's salvation and my heart was full of gratitude toward Him.

Later, when my husband went out on a supply run, I would have to work in the plant. Sometimes, it happened to be our meeting time. Although I participated, I felt agitated. I felt guilty in my heart. I thought of how I'd made myself ill because of earning money. The doctor had given me a death sentence. It was God who had saved me when I was on the brink of death and given me a second chance. But I couldn't do my duty and repay His love. I felt that I owed God. I thought of what the Lord Jesus said: **“For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?”** (Matthew 16:26). And in 1 Timothy 6:8 it says: “Having food and raiment let us be

therewith content.” What’s the point of earning more money, if it means you lose your life? I thought about renting out the coal plant. I’d earn less money, but still enough to live on, and I could then worship God and do my duty. But I had second thoughts. The coal plant was doing so well, and it had been so hard to get the business started. It seemed a shame to just give it up. I hesitated. I didn’t know what to do, so I prayed for God’s help.

One day, I read this in God’s words: **“But there is an exceedingly simple way to free oneself from this state, which is to bid farewell to one’s former way of living; to say goodbye to one’s previous goals in life; to summarize and analyze one’s previous lifestyle, view of life, pursuits, desires, and ideals; and then to compare them with God’s will and demands for man, and see whether any of them is consistent with God’s will and demands, whether any of them delivers the right values of life, leads one to a greater understanding of the truth, and allows one to live with humanity and the likeness of a human being. When you repeatedly investigate and carefully dissect the various goals that people pursue in life and their myriad ways of living, you will find not one of them conforms to the Creator’s original intention with which He created humanity. All of them draw people away from the Creator’s sovereignty and care; they are all traps which cause people to become depraved, and which lead them to hell. After you recognize this, your task is to lay aside your old view of life, stay far from various traps, let God take charge of your life and make arrangements for you; it is to try only to submit to God’s orchestrations and guidance, to live without individual choice, and to become a person who worships God”** (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique III). Reading God’s words, I thought of the satanic rules of life I’d relied on before, trying to become rich. I’d believed that “Money makes the world go round” and “Money isn’t

everything, but without it, you can do nothing.” In order to be rich, and to earn people’s respect, I’d had to struggle for money. Those days had been painful and miserable. Was money that important? What could it really give me? It could buy a house, a car, it could help me live a good material life, and bring me respect, and it could bring me temporary fleshly enjoyment. But it couldn’t fill the emptiness in my heart, or stop my pain, it couldn’t bring me peace or joy, it couldn’t end my suffering from disease, and it couldn’t save my life. I thought of my local school’s principal. He’d had money and status but had died of cancer. Money and status couldn’t help him escape suffering and death. I’d heard of rich people who lived lives of pain and emptiness, and killed themselves in order to end it, as well as people who have lied, cheated, fought, and defrauded others, losing all humanity and conscience, just for money. All these stories, and my own personal experience, allowed me to see that chasing monetary gain only makes people more corrupt, and more decadent. It takes them away from God and toward sin. I thought of Job, who didn’t seek money or material comforts. Job yielded to God’s sovereignty, and sought to know His deeds within all things, and, in the end, gained God’s blessing. I thought of how, when Jesus called him, Peter cast all else aside to follow God. He sought to know God, and love God, and God perfected him, and he led a meaningful life. From this, I realized that knowing God, worshiping Him, living in line with His word, and gaining His praise, are the most important things in life. It was hard for me to find faith and find the right path. I knew if I continued chasing wealth and earthly delights, and gave up my pursuit of the truth and salvation, it would be foolish. When I thought of this, I felt calm. I didn’t want to be a slave to money anymore. I just wanted more time and energy to pursue the truth. After that, I discussed renting out the plant with my

husband. With help from God's wondrous orchestrations, we rented it out. I was able to attend gatherings regularly and do my duty.

Two years later, my husband caught a sudden illness, and died. His passing was difficult for me and showed me how fragile life is. My husband spent most of his life rushing about, trying to make money. His blood pressure was over 200, but he kept working. When he fractured his hip, he went back to work before full recovery, and wouldn't rest when I urged him. He was a slave to money, too. He was controlled and harmed by Satan his whole life. He wouldn't give up, even in the face of death. He wanted to earn money and live the good life, but he lost his life. Fame and wealth couldn't save him or ease his pain or help him cheat death. It's like God says: **"People spend their lives chasing after money and fame; they clutch at these straws, thinking they are their only means of support, as if by having them they could live on, exempt from death. But only when they are about to die do they realize how distant these things are from them, how weak they are in the face of death, how easily they shatter, how lonely and helpless they are, with nowhere to turn. They realize that life cannot be bought with money or fame, that no matter how wealthy a person may be, no matter how lofty their position, all are equally poor and insignificant in the face of death. They realize that money cannot buy life, that fame cannot erase death, that neither money nor fame can lengthen a person's life by a single minute, a single second"** (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique III). Looking back on how I spent most of my life running around, trying to make money, I saw that though I gained respect and admiration, I was tortured by Satan to within an inch of my life. But God saved me. He saved me from the maelstrom of money and changed my direction in life. Now, as I pursue the

truth and do my duty, I feel free and at peace. This is something that money can't buy. I'm thankful to Almighty God for saving me!

8. Knowing God's Authority and Sovereignty in Life

By Xinxin, USA

Almighty God says, **“Knowledge of God’s authority, God’s power, God’s own identity, and God’s essence cannot be achieved by relying on your imagination. Since you cannot rely on imagination to know the authority of God, then in what way can you achieve a true knowledge of God’s authority? The way to do this is through eating and drinking the words of God, through fellowship, and through experiencing the words of God. Thus, you will have a gradual experience and verification of God’s authority and you will gain a gradual understanding and incremental knowledge of it. This is the only way to achieve the knowledge of God’s authority; there are no shortcuts. Asking you not to imagine is not the same as making you sit passively to await destruction, or stopping you from doing anything. Not using your brain to think and imagine means not using logic to infer, not using knowledge to analyze, not using science as the basis, but instead appreciating, verifying, and confirming that the God you believe in has authority, confirming that He holds sovereignty over your fate, and that His power at all times proves Him to be the true God Himself, through the words of God, through the truth, through everything that you encounter in life. This is the only way that anyone can achieve an understanding of God”** (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique I). I used to think going through something major or witnessing miracles was the only way to know God’s authority. My understanding of God’s authority was really limited. I’ve seen from God’s words that what’s most crucial for knowing His authority is experiencing His words in regular life, and by

experiencing His words, we'll see His authority and sovereignty over everything. That's how our faith in God grows.

Last year there was a sudden, heavy insect infestation on nearly a quarter acre of tomatoes my family had planted, and they ate everything—the fruit, the flowers, and the leaves. I was really worried about it and discussed how to get rid of them with my family. Using pesticides would ruin the soil and leave carcinogens behind, which would make anything planted there dangerous to eat. We tried to catch them by hand but they reproduced too quickly. We worked for three or four days but didn't make a dent. Their numbers just increased. I hurriedly tried other ways to get rid of them. Though I prayed to God when this happened, I didn't understand God's authority and rule, so He didn't have a place in my heart. I didn't know how to truly rely on God and seek His will. I'd never encountered that particular bug before, but I'd grown food for decades and had lots of pest control experience. I figured I could get through this if I kept looking into it. I tried every fix I knew one by one, but I tried six or seven without any results. In all my decades of growing, I'd never seen a bug so hard to get rid of. I'd always been able to take care of infestations in the past, but this time none of my laboriously developed methods were working. A friend later told me that a professor at the agricultural university said neem oil was a good pest deterrent, so I bought some right away, but that didn't work either. I was out of ideas and I still hadn't found a solution. I went to check on it every morning over the next couple of days and saw all those tomato plants ravaged by the insects. Some kept dropping their flowers, the tips of some leaves wilted, and some of the fruit was rotting. I was miserable. Brothers and sisters had helped every day to plant those tomatoes. They did lots of work, building trellises, trimming, and staking plants, but just when the tomatoes were flourishing and a great harvest was

in sight, these bugs suddenly invaded. I figured that year's harvest would be a failure. Seeing the plants all covered with insects, I was totally at a loss. My neighbor Wang had a lot of experience with crops and knew a lot about pests, so I thought he might have a solution. I went to ask him, but he said, "I've never seen anything like it in all my 30 years of farming. I've been spraying pesticides three times a day and it just killed my tomatoes, not the bugs." Another neighbor, Zhang, said helplessly, "I even mixed three or four pesticides together, but nothing will kill them!" Hearing this really plunged me into despair. This was a plague of insects, and there was no way to get rid of them. It seemed my tomatoes would all be destroyed. Feeling helpless, I prayed to God: "Oh God! I don't know what to do about this outbreak. I'm at a loss. Please enlighten and guide me so I know how I should experience this and what lesson I should learn."

I read these words from God in a gathering once, **"Under God's sovereignty and control, all things come into being or disappear in accordance with His thoughts; laws arise that govern their existence, and they grow and multiply in keeping with them. No human being or thing is above these laws. Why is this? The only answer is this: It is because of God's authority. Or, to put it another way, it is because of God's thoughts and God's words; because of the personal actions of God Himself. This means that it is God's authority and God's mind that give rise to these laws, which shift and change according to His thoughts, and these shifts and changes all occur or fade away for the sake of His plan. Take epidemics, for example. They break out without warning. No one knows their origins or the exact reasons why they happen, and whenever an epidemic reaches a certain place, those who are doomed cannot escape calamity. Human science understands epidemics to be caused by the spread of vicious or harmful microbes,**

and their speed, range, and method of transmission cannot be predicted or controlled by human science. Though people resist epidemics by every means possible, they cannot control which people or animals are inevitably affected when epidemics break out. The only thing human beings can do is try to prevent them, resist them, and research them. But no one knows the root causes that explain the beginning or ending of any individual epidemic, and no one can control them. Faced with the rise and spread of an epidemic, the first measure humans take is to develop a vaccine, but often the epidemic dies out on its own before the vaccine is ready. Why do epidemics die out? Some say the germs have been brought under control, while others say they die out because of the change of seasons.... As to whether these wild speculations are tenable, science can offer no explanation and can give no precise answer. Humanity must not only reckon with these speculations, but also with mankind's lack of understanding and fear of epidemics. No one knows, in the final analysis, why epidemics begin or why they end. Because humanity has faith only in science, relies entirely upon it, and does not recognize the Creator's authority or accept His sovereignty, they will never obtain an answer" (The Word, Vol. 2.

On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique III). God rules over all things. Everything is in His hands. Whether it's big or small, visible or not, something living or dead, everything exists or disappears as God's will shifts. Every disaster is under God's rule. People don't know where plagues and pestilences come from or how to prevent them. We have no idea when they'll disappear. All of this is ruled by God. But I didn't truly understand God's authority and sovereignty, so when those bugs infested my tomatoes I didn't come before God to seek and rely on Him first, but tried to find a solution with my own methods. That was fruitless, but I still didn't turn to God or lean on Him. I

felt hopeless and helpless when I found out even pesticides weren't working. I had faith in God and spoke words of prayer to Him, but He didn't have a place in my heart. I thought I could get rid of these bugs myself. How arrogant and ignorant! Then I realized that God decides when they appear and when they go away. It's out of our control. I still didn't understand what God's will was in that infestation, but I knew I just needed to do my own part and leave the insects up to God. I had to submit to God's arrangements. That realization brought me peace. I prayed to God, willing to submit and experience what He'd arranged.

I went to the field a couple days later and saw lots of spider webs in the tomato plants. I wondered where they'd all come from. I looked closer and saw lots of little moths in the webs and I remembered that spiders like to eat them. Without the moths, there wouldn't be any eggs, so there would naturally be fewer bugs. I realized there were a lot fewer insects than there had been two days before. I knew this was God's doing, that He had brought the spiders to eat the insects. I was so grateful to God! After another seven or eight days I saw that all those bugs were gone from the tomato plants' fruit, branches, flowers, and leaves. I was so excited. I'd never imagined that in just a few short days the spiders would eat all those insects. God really is almighty! If I hadn't seen it with my own eyes, I'd hardly believe it was true. I was filled with thanks and praise for God. Nonbelievers don't understand God's rule and authority. They just believe in and rely on science to learn about and avoid disasters, but they can't fully understand them. They have nothing to rely on, they're helpless in the face of disasters, so their crop yields suffer a lot. But when I turned to God, willing to submit and lean on God, He used these humble spiders to eat all the bugs, very easily taking care of the infestation. This really showed me that God rules everything and mobilizes all things. He's so wise and

almighty! When it was time for the tomatoes to ripen, I thought it would be a terrible harvest because of the infestation, but to my surprise, it was a bumper crop. God works in wondrous ways! It's just like it says in Almighty God's words: **"His deeds are omnipresent, His power is omnipresent, His wisdom is omnipresent, and His authority is omnipresent. Each of these laws and rules is the embodiment of His deeds, and each one reveals His wisdom and authority. Who can exempt themselves from His sovereignty? And who can discharge themselves from His designs? All things exist beneath His gaze, and moreover, all things live under His sovereignty. His deeds and His power leave mankind with no choice but to acknowledge the fact that He really does exist and holds sovereignty over all things"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Appendix 3: Man Can Only Be Saved Amidst God's Management). I really experienced through this that God's authority and wisdom are everywhere. The weather, the sun and the rain are ruled by God and so is every kind of insect. No created being could control any of that. In every little detail in God's creation and management of all things, we can really see God's unique authority. He's so wise and almighty! I thought to myself that no matter what happens in the future, I have to rely on God and better understand His deeds.

Two months later we planted a batch of amaranth, and after a couple weeks a nice green patch appeared. I figured we'd have a great harvest. But one morning, my wife told me there were diamondback moth larvae on the plants and asked me to deal with it. Hearing this scared me. Those larvae are really active and hard to catch by hand and they reproduce like crazy. They mature in just one or two days. They'd grown on some melons we'd planted before and I'd tried over a dozen things, but nothing worked. They ate all our vegetables in just a couple of days and our thriving garden turned

into a wasteland. I was a bit worried, wondering if they would eat all our amaranth within a couple of days. I didn't know what to do. I quickly prayed to God and asked Him to guide me to understand His will.

I later read this in God's words: **“Job possessed and pursued these things while being unable to see God or hear the words of God; though he had never seen God, he had come to know the means by which God rules over all things, and he understood the wisdom with which God does so. Though he had never heard the words spoken by God, Job knew that the deeds of rewarding man and taking from man all come from God. Although the years of his life were no different from those of any ordinary person, he did not allow the unremarkableness of his life to affect his knowledge of God's sovereignty over all things, or to affect his following of the way of fearing God and shunning evil. In his eyes, the laws of all things were full of God's deeds, and God's sovereignty could be seen in any part of a person's life. He had not seen God, but he was able to realize that God's deeds are everywhere, and during his unremarkable time on earth, in every corner of his life he was able to see and realize the extraordinary and wondrous deeds of God, and he could see the wondrous arrangements of God. The hiddenness and silence of God did not hinder Job's realization of God's deeds, nor did they affect his knowledge of God's sovereignty over all things. His life was the realization, during his everyday life, of the sovereignty and arrangements of God, who is hidden among all things. In his everyday life he also heard and understood the voice of God's heart and the words of God, who is silent among all things yet expresses the voice of His heart and His words by governing the laws of all things. You see, then, that if people have the same humanity and pursuit as Job, then they can gain the same realization and knowledge as Job, and can**

acquire the same understanding and knowledge of God's sovereignty over all things as Job" (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God's Work, God's Disposition, and God Himself II). I saw in God's words that Job focused on understanding God's authority in his daily life and experiencing God's rule and almightiness. Through this, he saw that everything comes from God, and that God rules and controls all things and mankind's fate. Job knew without a doubt that he had all of that wealth because of God's blessings and rule, and it hadn't come from his own hard work. When his wealth was taken away, he also believed it was entirely with God's permission. What is given and what is taken away is ruled and determined by God. That's why he didn't complain, but he praised God. But when something happened that was difficult or that I didn't like, I wasn't able to accept it and submit to God. I saw God didn't have a place in my heart and I was lacking faith. This thought left me feeling ashamed and I understood that God was allowing all this to happen. God wanted me to know His almightiness and rule and truly submit to Him in my daily life. Whether we could get rid of the insects and whether the amaranth would do well was all in God's hands. It's just like the old saying, "Man plants the seed, but Heaven decides the harvest." I knew I should let things take their course, learn to seek God's will, and submit to His arrangements. I felt a lot better at that thought and I quietly prayed to God, "Oh God, I believe that how well the amaranth does is in Your hands. I'll let go of my plans and worries, experience Your words in this environment and obey You." After that we tried a few things to get rid of the larvae, but nothing worked. I was calm, though. I knew it was all in God's hands and even if we didn't end up getting a good harvest, that would be God's will. I submitted to what He had arranged. I went to the vegetable field a couple days later where I saw flocks of sparrows eating the bugs off the amaranth. I was amazed to see God once again opening up a

path for me and solving a problem I couldn't solve myself. I was so grateful to God! After another two days the larvae had all been eaten by the sparrows. We were thrilled, and thanked and praised God over and over. God really is almighty!

Later, I read this in God's words: **"When God created all things, He used all sorts of methods and ways to balance them, to balance the living conditions of the mountains and lakes, of the plants and all kinds of animals, birds, and insects. His goal was to allow all kinds of living beings to live and multiply under the laws that He had established. None of the things of creation can go outside of these laws, and the laws cannot be broken. Only within this type of basic environment can humans safely survive and multiply, generation after generation"** (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique IX). I saw from God's words that when He created all things, He balanced their living conditions in all sorts of ways so that every living thing under His rule lives and reproduces in a very orderly way, supporting each other and holding each other in check, as God has determined. Nothing can go against these rules that God has made. God created all animals, plants, and insects for ecological balance to protect our living environment and provide stability. Without these arrangements by God, without the rules He's set, animals and insects would fall into chaos and that would throw our lives into chaos. We couldn't survive. God's considerations are meticulous. All things reveal His great power, wisdom, and wondrousness, and even more, His love for mankind. As we saw it, there was no solution to the insects that appeared on our vegetables, but God used sparrows and spiders to eat them so we could enjoy the food God provided for us. Everything created by God has its purpose, even the humble spiders and sparrows have their own mission. God uses them to balance the environment. God makes all things

interrelated. It's all so we can live better. Later, some little black insects and stinkbugs appeared on other vegetables we planted. I prayed to God, and then thought of those bugs' natural enemy, the toad. We released five toads in the field and in just two months, they had grown in number to about 30. There were fewer and fewer bugs and we had a great harvest. I was so grateful to God for this. I thought of God's words, **"Though the phrase 'God's authority' may seem unfathomable, God's authority is not at all abstract. He is present with man through every minute of man's life, leading him through every day. So, in real life, every person will necessarily see and experience the most tangible aspect of God's authority. This tangible aspect is proof enough that God's authority truly exists, and it fully allows one to recognize and to comprehend the fact that God possesses such authority"** (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique III). I used to think that I'd have to go through some major events to understand God's authority, so I didn't pay attention to experiencing it through little things in everyday life. After that, I saw that God's authority isn't as hard to understand as I'd thought. His authority and power are always evident and they're with us in our daily lives. Whether it's something large or small, as long as we focus on experiencing God's words, we'll see His authority.

During those few months when I was faced with those infestations, at first I only knew to rely on my experience and scientific knowledge, but that got me nowhere. When I submitted and experienced God's words, I saw His deeds and gained a practical understanding of God's authority and sovereignty. My faith in God grew, too. Thanks be to God!

9. Faith Means Relying on God

By Cheng Cheng, Italy

Almighty God says, **“It is only from within your faith that you will be able to see God, and when you have faith God will perfect you. Without faith, He cannot do this. God will bestow upon you whatever you hope to gain. If you do not have faith, then you cannot be perfected and you will be unable to see God’s actions, much less His omnipotence. When you have faith that you will see His actions in your practical experience, then God will appear to you, and He will enlighten and guide you from within. Without that faith, God will be unable to do that. If you have lost hope in God, how will you be able to experience His work? Therefore, only when you have faith and you do not harbor doubts toward God, only when you have true faith in Him no matter what He does, will He enlighten and illuminate you through your experiences, and only then will you be able to see His actions. These things are all achieved through faith. Faith comes only through refinement, and in the absence of refinement, faith cannot develop. What does this word, ‘faith,’ refer to? Faith is the genuine belief and the sincere heart that humans should possess when they cannot see or touch something, when God’s work does not align with human notions, when it is beyond human reach. This is the faith that I speak of”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Those Who Are to Be Made Perfect Must Undergo Refinement). God’s words tell us that having true faith in God is critical. No matter what kind of trials we may encounter or how great our difficulties are, God wants everyone to believe His words and have faith in Him, to truly rely on God and cooperate with Him. That’s the only way to witness

God's almighty rule and His deeds through experience. Thanks to God's guidance, I've personally experienced this a bit.

The morning of November 18, 2016, I got a message online from an older brother from Italy saying he felt spiritually parched and wanted to know more about The Church of Almighty God. When I read it, I could feel the urgency in his longing and waiting for the Lord's return. I started communicating with him through translation software. He was feeling disappointed by the corruption and depravity in the Catholic Church, so he'd been searching high and low for a true church since 1991. He'd also read Watchman Nee's and Witness Lee's books, but he never got any real spiritual sustenance. He said that living without the Lord was painful, lacked meaning, and was devoid of hope. He saw some videos and images from The Church of Almighty God online and was immediately drawn in. He said it really seemed like a true church and he wanted to learn more about it. Seeing how urgently he was seeking from everything he said left me with an even greater sense of urgency. I was overflowing with things I wanted to tell him, but I couldn't express them in Italian. I wanted to read Almighty God's words to him, but the Italian translation hadn't been published yet. I wanted him to watch some gospel movies, but the Italian versions of those hadn't been released, either. He didn't know any other languages. All I could do was send him a music video because music and dance are a universal language. But he felt even more anxious after watching it and said in a supplicating way, "Tell me just as soon as the Church has an Italian website." Seeing this from him reminded me of something Almighty God has said: **"How will you pass on what you have seen and experienced to those pitiable, poor, and devout religious believers who hunger and thirst for righteousness and are waiting for you to shepherd them? What kind of people are waiting for you to**

shepherd them? Can you imagine? Are you aware of the burden on your shoulders, your commission, and your responsibility? Where is your sense of historic mission? How will you adequately serve as a master in the next age? Do you have a strong sense of masterhood? How would you explain the master of all things? Is it really the master of all living creatures and of all physical things in the world? What plans do you have for the progress of the next phase of the work? How many people are waiting for you to be their shepherd? Is your task a heavy one? They are poor, pitiable, blind, and at a loss, wailing in the darkness—where is the way? How they yearn for the light, like a shooting star, to suddenly descend and dispel the forces of darkness that have oppressed man for so many years. Who can know the full extent to which they anxiously hope, and how they pine, day and night, for this? Even on a day when the light flashes past, these deeply suffering people remain imprisoned in a dark dungeon without hope of release; when will they weep no longer? Terrible is the misfortune of these fragile spirits who have never been granted rest, and long have they been kept bound in this state by merciless bonds and frozen history. And who has heard the sound of their wailing? Who has looked upon their miserable state? Has it ever occurred to you how grieved and anxious God’s heart is? How can He bear to see innocent mankind, whom He created with His own hands, suffering such torment?” (The

Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. How Should You Attend to Your Future Mission?).

After reading this, I saw that God has entrusted us to spread the gospel and bear witness, but even in the face of God’s urgent requirements, I felt like my hands were tied. I wasn’t able to bear witness for God’s work of the last days. That brother had been lost in darkness and grasping at straws for years, but I couldn’t help him gain the sustenance of God’s words. I felt

terrible. I practically wanted to cry when I saw his messages, and felt I was between a rock and a hard place. If I pulled back, I'd delay his investigation of the true way that he sought and longed for. If I went forward, I'd rely on inaccurate translation tools since I couldn't speak Italian. Sometimes they weren't accurate even with simple things, never mind spiritual terms. So how could we communicate? I felt like I was mute. My eyes were wide open, but I couldn't do a thing. I also thought about finding a brother or sister who knew Italian, but I couldn't find anyone who fit the bill. I was really at a loss at that point and I thought, "All I know how to say in Italian is 'Hello' and 'Goodbye.' So no matter how I try, I'll never be able to bear witness to God's work of the last days." I felt really down.

Early the next morning, I got a message from him saying that the very first thing he thought of when he woke up was to ask me about The Church of Almighty God. The fact that he kept messaging me left me really anxious. I said an urgent prayer: "Dear God, I've never studied Italian and I really don't know how to share the gospel with this brother. God, please guide me." This passage of God's words suddenly came to mind after my prayer: **"You must have faith that everything is in God's hands, and that humans are merely cooperating with Him. If your heart is sincere, God will see it, and He will open up all paths for you, making difficulties no longer difficult. This is the faith you must have"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Entry Into Life Is Most Important to Faith in God). **"You need not worry about anything while you perform your duty, as long as you use all your strength and put your heart into it. God will not make things difficult for you or force you to do what you are not capable of"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Entry Into Life Is Most Important to Faith in God). Reading this bolstered my faith and courage. It's true that all things are in God's hands and all things are possible with Him. What God

wants most from us when we run into difficulties is our sincerity and cooperation, that we truly trust and rely on Him and do our best to work with Him. Then God will help solve our problems. But when I faced that kind of problem, I realized God didn't have a place in my heart. I was living within my own notions and imaginings, thinking that since I couldn't speak Italian, I couldn't communicate normally with that brother, so there was no way I could bear witness to God's work. I became mired in this difficulty, feeling negative and regressive. How could I get God's guidance and witness His deeds that way? I needed to truly rely on God and do everything in my power to cooperate with Him, and trust that He'd open up a path for me. With that mindset, I suddenly thought of some Italian Bible verses I'd put together two nights before prophesying God's work in the last days. I figured I could use those to communicate with the brother. So, one morning I sent them to him to help our communication. That afternoon I was pleasantly surprised to see that the trailer for an Italian version of a movie, *The Mystery of Godliness* had been released. I sent it to him right away. He later said he'd understood that the movie talked about the biblical prophecies of the Lord's return. He asked me excitedly, "Has the Lord returned? Is He in China? What's His name now?" In that moment, I felt like he was a lost sheep who had suddenly heard his shepherd's call and was looking everywhere for its source. Choking back tears, I wrote back, "His name is Almighty God, and He's what was prophesied in Revelation, **'Which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty'** (Revelation 1:8)." At this point, I saw how every stage of God's rule neatly fits into the next. I knew no Italian aside from a few simple greetings, but this experience gave me a deep awareness that I'd communicated smoothly with that brother through God's guidance, and I'd even seen some results. I saw

that everything is in God's hands, that we should genuinely trust and lean on God and earnestly work with Him.

I faced another test after that. This brother was always asking me when I'd give him testimony of God's last-days work. I was eager to do that, too, but we still had the same language barrier and I still couldn't find a brother or sister to help. If I found an unbeliever to translate, they wouldn't understand the spiritual terms and might not do a good job. Thinking of these problems left me in despair. I didn't know what to do. I was like a cat on a hot tin roof. I called out to God over and over: "Oh God, my hands are tied. I don't know what to do now, and I don't know what I'm supposed to learn from this. Please guide me and open up a path for me." After praying, I thought of Moses crossing the Red Sea. Moses faced all sorts of difficulties as he led the Israelites out of Egypt, but he never lost faith in God. He prayed and cooperated with God, and witnessed so many of God's wonders. Without the Red Sea and the army chasing them, and without his 40 years in the desert, how could Moses have such faith and witness? Without facing those difficulties in my duty, how could I gain true faith in God? Not to mention, I wasn't facing anything like crossing the Red Sea. And since I'd met that brother online, God had always opened up a path for me and I'd witnessed lots of His wondrous deeds. I knew I should have more faith in God and rely on Him more. At this thought I suddenly realized that God wanted to perfect my faith and reliance on Him through these difficulties to give me more practical understanding of God's almighty rule through my actual experiences. Once I'd understood God's will, I had no doubt God would open up a path for me. We set a date to meet online, and brothers and sisters arranged for a 15-year-old sister who'd studied Italian to come with us to interpret. When I heard a 15-year-old sister would be helping interpret, I thought about myself and that young sister. I was

really young, I hadn't believed in God for long, and I'd never preached the gospel. Would it work to have such a young girl helping to preach the gospel? I was feeling really uncertain. But when I heard this young sister fluently reading God's words in Italian and she said she memorized new words quickly, I was both surprised and ashamed. God had assembled all the right people for the work of spreading the gospel. This reminded me of a passage of God's words: **"When a commitment or promise is uttered from the mouth of God, all things serve its fulfillment, and are maneuvered for the sake of its fulfillment; all creatures are orchestrated and arranged under the dominion of the Creator, playing their respective role, and serving their respective function. This is the manifestation of the Creator's authority"** (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique I). Through that experience, I saw that God would guide me as long as I sincerely leaned on Him, and I'd see His wondrous deeds.

After finding this young sister to translate, I was finally able to communicate normally with that brother. A great weight was lifted from me. But before I knew it, I didn't have such an earnest desire to lean on God. Yet that sister had something important come up, and she couldn't help translate anymore. I felt like collapsing when I heard the news. There was so much I still wanted to tell that brother so he could lay a foundation on the true way. But without my interpreter, there was nothing I could do. Then I heard about someone seeking the true way who'd been misled by the rumors spread by the CCP and the religious community, so they didn't dare keep looking into it. I was afraid that if he wasn't watered in time, this Italian brother would be hindered, too. I felt powerless and really didn't know what to do. Then one day I saw that brother share this on his own page: "Friends, brothers and sisters, Jesus Christ has returned! Rejoice!" Seeing him post that made me break out in a cold sweat because he had

over 3,000 religious friends. If just a few of them were antichrists who could mislead and disturb him, how would he fare? I was feeling apprehensive, so I came before God in prayer. “Oh God, without an interpreter, this brother can’t be watered right away and I’m afraid he’ll pull away after being misled by others’ arguments. How should I experience Your words and learn a lesson in this situation? Please guide me.” I read this in God’s words after my prayer: **“People spend most of their time living in a state of unconsciousness. They do not know whether they should rely on God or on themselves. They then tend to choose to rely on themselves and the beneficial conditions and environments around them, as well as on any people, events, and things that are to their advantage. This is what people are best at. What they are worst at is relying on God and looking up to Him, because they feel looking up to God to be too much of a bother—they cannot see, they cannot touch—and they feel that doing so is vague and unrealistic. Thus, in this aspect of their lessons, people perform the worst, and their entry to it is the shallowest. If you do not learn how to look up to and rely on God, you will never see God work in you, guide you, or enlighten you. If you cannot see these things, then questions such as ‘whether God exists and whether He guides everything in the life of mankind’ will, in the depths of your heart, end with a question mark rather than a period or exclamation mark. ‘Does God guide everything in the life of mankind?’ ‘Does God observe the depths of man’s heart?’ For what reason do you make these into questions? If you do not truly rely on or look up to God, you will not be able to give rise to genuine faith in Him. If you cannot give rise to genuine faith in Him, then for you, those question marks will forever be there, accompanying everything God does, and there will be no periods”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days.

Believers Must Begin by Seeing Through the World's Evil Trends). God's words awakened me and I finally realized I'd forgotten God again. When God put me in a situation where I felt helpless, where I couldn't communicate and didn't know what to do, I saw God as my lifeline. But when the right conditions and right people were there, I immediately just relied on other people because I felt that was more practical. When that young sister came to help in my time of need, I knew it was God's doing. But afterward, I still thought whether the brother would accept God's work of the last days totally depended on that interpreter. I still lacked genuine faith in God. I thought of something the Lord Jesus said: **"My Father, which gave them Me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand"** (John 10:29). God's sheep hear His voice. No rumors, lies, or hardships can wrest God's people from His hands. This is a manifestation of God's authority. I should believe God's words, do my own duty, and explore every avenue to fellowship with that brother. Whether he was misled by rumors and lies wasn't for me to decide.

I read this in Almighty God's words after that: **"Satan has been corrupting mankind for thousands of years. It has wrought untold amounts of evil, has deceived generation after generation, and has committed heinous crimes in the world. It has abused man, deceived man, seduced man to oppose God, and has committed evil acts that have confounded and impaired God's plan of management time and time again. Yet, under the authority of God, all things and living creatures continue to abide by the rules and laws set down by God. Compared to the authority of God, Satan's evil nature and rampancy are so ugly, so disgusting and despicable, and so small and vulnerable. Even though Satan walks among all things created by God, it is not able to enact the slightest change in the people, things, and objects**

commanded by God” (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique I). God’s words helped me to let go. It’s true that all things are under God’s rule, and no one can stand in the way of what God wants to do. No one can take God’s sheep away. If one who is not God’s sheep gets into God’s house, they’ll be exposed and eliminated one day. This is God’s authority and power. I saw I really didn’t understand God. I was a living example of that. Before accepting Almighty God’s work of the last days, I’d listened to the lies of the religious world and the CCP for five years. Though a lot stood in my way, God’s words drew me to accept His work of the last days. And now, no amount of heresies and lies that they spread can stand in the way of me following Almighty God. They just help me see Satan’s hideous countenance more clearly and strengthen my faith to follow God. This was all achieved in me by God’s words. I thought back over nearly a month of communicating with that brother. We didn’t share a language and couldn’t communicate normally, but we kept going until he accepted God’s work of the last days. He even mentioned spreading the gospel and establishing a church in Italy. Could any of that have been achieved without God’s guidance, without God’s words conquering people? I saw I was really lacking understanding of God. When I spread the gospel, I’d say that God’s authority is unparalleled and no force can hinder His work, but I was always analyzing things logically. When faced with the difficulty of a language barrier, I was afraid that brother would be driven away by rumors and antichrists’ lies. I was living in a state of fear. But in fact, whether or not he could accept the true way was in God’s hands, it was ordained by God. Instead of having groundless worries, I should just do my duty well and be responsible. At that thought, I said a prayer to God, willing to submit to His rule and arrangements. Surprisingly, before long, that young sister sent me a message to let me know she was free and could help with

interpreting again. I could finally communicate smoothly with the Italian brother.

Even though sometimes I'd felt totally disheartened and sometimes I was incredibly anxious in the process of sharing the gospel with that brother, when I really relied on God, I witnessed His guidance and deeds over and over. I saw that all of God's work is done by God Himself, and my faith in Him grew. This was all God's grace and mercy. I used to think that sharing the gospel was saving other people, but then I realized that in that process, I was experiencing God's work and words. Through this experience, I, a "doubting Thomas," truly experienced God's authority and faithfulness. Just as it says in God's words: **"When someone encounters an especially thorny difficulty, when they have no one to turn to, and when they feel particularly helpless, they put their only hope in God. What are their prayers like? What is their state of mind? Are they sincere? Is there any adulteration at that time? It is only when you trust God as though He were the last straw that you clutch onto to save your life, hoping that He will help you, that your heart is sincere. Though you may not have said much, your heart has already stirred. That is, you give your sincere heart to God, and God listens. When God listens, He sees your difficulties, and He will enlighten you, guide you, and help you"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Believers Must Begin by Seeing Through the World's Evil Trends). Knowing God requires us to truly practice and experience God's words through people, events, and things we encounter every day, and in the process of doing our duty. That's the only way to truly know and fear God. My experience has taught me to appreciate this. Thanks be to Almighty God!

10. The Heart's Deliverance

By Zheng Xin, USA

In October of 2016, my husband and I accepted God's work in the last days while we were abroad. A few months later, Sister Wang, who accepted God's work with me, had been progressing quickly, and everyone was praising her for good caliber. Once after one gathering, I heard Sister Lin say, "Everything Sister Wang has fellowshiped today, about her acceptance and understanding of God's words, was spoken from the heart. What she said also has some light to it, and for me it's very helpful." Actually, at first, hearing everyone say this made me feel quite envious of her. But a while later, I started to feel disgruntled: How come everyone was praising her, and not me? Had I not grown at all? Was there something wrong with my fellowship? Gradually, I was unwilling to accept the fact that she was better than I, and started to secretly set myself against her. I thought to myself, "You can fellowship on God's words, but I can too. The day will come when I'll surpass you. I'll save the understanding and knowledge that I gain from God's words and only share it when in gatherings. That way, everyone will see that my fellowship is quite good and practical, too."

For a period of time after that, I wrote down in a notebook everything I had gained and understood from God's words. When it was time for the gathering, I had to ponder them carefully in my heart, to see how I could share them in fellowship in a way that would be just as clear, organized, and methodical as Sister Wang. But for some reason, the more I tried to show off in front of my brothers and sisters, the more I made a fool of myself. As soon as it was my turn to fellowship, either my mind would go blank or my words would come out in a total jumble. I was unable to clearly state the perspectives I had wanted to articulate. The gathering ended up being very

embarrassing for me. After I got home one day, I said to my husband, “Whenever I hear there’s light to Sister Wang’s fellowshiping about God’s words during the gatherings, I feel really uncomfortable—” But before I finished speaking, my husband glared at me and said to me in all earnestness, “Sister Wang’s fellowship does have light, and is helpful to us. We should thank God for this. This discomfort you feel—isn’t it just jealousy?” His words were like a slap in the face. I quickly shook my head in denial: “No, that’s not it. I’m not like that.” My husband went on to say, “Our brothers and sisters have all gained enjoyment from Sister Wang’s fellowship, but hearing it makes you feel uneasy. That just means you’re jealous because she’s more capable than you.” Hearing this made me feel even more upset. Could it be that I was really such a jealous person? I said to him, “Stop talking now. Let me calm down, and I’ll give it some thought by myself.” After that, my husband told Sister Liu in the church about what was going on with me, hoping she would help me out. When I heard about that, I reproached him: “How could you speak to her without checking with me first? If she tells everyone about this, how are they gonna look at me?” The more I thought about it, the more upset I became. I prayed silently to God: “Oh God! Please grant me guidance. Please help me.”

The next day, I reflected upon what I had revealed over that period of time. It occurred to me that ordinarily when I read God’s words, I would keep any light that I gained to myself, and then share it during our gatherings. This was actually just a desire to talk about things that other people didn’t know about so that my brothers and sisters would have a higher opinion of me. When I saw that Sister Wang had light in her fellowship, I always felt uneasy and wanted to surpass her. I used to think that I was really easygoing with others and never tended to fuss over every little thing, that I was a simple person at heart. But now it turned out that I

could be jealous of someone, and that I could even secretly set myself against and compete with them. How could I be such a person? I called a sister on the phone and asked her, “Sister, do you ever feel jealous during gatherings after hearing light in other brothers’ and sisters’ fellowshiping about God’s words?” She replied, “No, I don’t. If our brothers and sisters have light in their fellowship, that’s helpful to me. It makes me really happy, and I very much enjoy it!” Hearing her say that made me feel even worse. I felt acutely just how intensely jealous I was being. No one else was jealous of the sister; only I was. Living in such a state, I prayed to God. I said to Him, “Oh God! I don’t want to be a jealous person, but every time I hear this sister’s wonderful fellowship, I involuntarily get jealous of her. Oh God! I don’t know what to do. Please, may You lead me to cast off my bonds of envy.”

Later, Sister Liu from our church came to see me. She fellowshiped with me in accordance with my state, and also read a passage of God’s words: **“Some people are always afraid that others will steal their limelight and surpass them, obtaining recognition while they themselves are neglected. This leads them to attack and exclude others. Is this not a case of being jealous of people more capable than themselves? Is such behavior not selfish and contemptible? What kind of disposition is this? It is malicious! Thinking only of oneself, satisfying only one’s own desires, showing no consideration for the duties of others, and thinking only about one’s own interests and not the interests of God’s house—people like this have a bad disposition, and God has no love for them”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Give Your True Heart to God, and You Can Obtain the Truth). When I heard these words of God, I felt that this was exactly the state I had been in. Sister Wang’s fellowship on God’s words was enlightening, but I didn’t try to

understand the truth or to seek a path of practice from what she had said. On the contrary, I felt envious of her. When my own fellowshiping was no good, and when I couldn't show off and, instead, ended up disgracing myself, my mind would be in a whirl, and I would get very negative and upset. I would be deeply afraid that my brothers and sisters would look down on me. I was so selfish and contemptible, and all I thought of was being able to stand out—I absolutely was not able to bear the sight of someone doing better than I. Wasn't that being jealous and envious? There's not a speck of normal humanity in that! Thinking back, I was also like that before I believed in God. When I was interacting with my friends and relatives, neighbors, and colleagues, I was constantly wanting others to speak well of me. Sometimes, when a colleague praised someone else's work in front of me, I would get to feeling uncomfortable, and in order to get others to speak highly of me, I would dedicate myself to doing my work well, and I was happy to do it no matter how difficult or exhausting it was. I used to have no awareness of that, but just thought of it as a sort of desire for advancement. Only then had I realized that those were manifestations of Satan's corrupt disposition. After that, I came before God frequently and prayed to Him about my difficulties. During gatherings, I focused on quieting my heart and listening to the fellowshiping of others. When it was my turn to fellowship, I no longer thought of how to fellowship better than Sister Wang did. Instead, I calmly pondered God's words and shared in fellowship what I understood of them. As I practiced this way, I really did feel a lot more relaxed and liberated.

After a period of time, I truly felt that my jealousy had ebbed compared to what it had been, but satanic corrupt disposition is really deeply rooted, and it reveals itself whenever a fitting circumstance arises. Later, during a few gatherings, whenever I saw that the other brothers and

sisters were praising Sister Wang's fellowship, I again began to feel some jealousy. After that, I felt some distance between me and her. However, living within that state, I didn't dare open up to others. I was afraid that if I did, they would look down on me. So, during several gatherings, I felt very inhibited.

One evening, Sister Liu gave me a call. Concerned, she asked me if I had been experiencing any difficulties lately. I responded vaguely, "Am I too corrupt? Will God refuse to save a person like me?" Afraid she would look down on me, I didn't say anything further. Then Sister Liu read a passage of God's words for me in light of my state: **"When some people hear that to be an honest person, one must open up and lay oneself bare, they say, 'It's hard being honest. Do I have to tell everything I think to others? Isn't it enough to commune the positive things? I don't need to tell others of my dark or corrupt side, do I?' If you do not tell others these things, and do not dissect yourself, then you will never know yourself; you will never recognize what kind of thing you are, and other people will never be able to trust you. This is fact. If you wish for others to trust you, first you must be honest. As an honest person, you must first lay your heart bare so that everyone can look into it, see all that you are thinking, and glimpse your true face; you must not try to disguise or package yourself to look good. Only then will people trust you and consider you honest. This is the most fundamental practice, and the prerequisite, of being an honest person"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The Most Fundamental Practice of Being an Honest Person). After reading those words from God, she fellowshiped with me, "We must open up and fellowship in order to seek the truth; this is one way to attain spiritual release. It is also a way to practice the truth and be an honest person. By doing so, we can receive help from our brothers and sisters. This

allows our corrupt dispositions to be resolved more quickly, and gives us a sense of release. If we are not willing to lay bare our difficulties, we will easily fall for Satan's trickery, and our lives will be liable to suffer losses." After listening to Sister Liu's fellowship, I plucked up my courage and told her what I had been going through. Sister Liu then read another passage of God's words: **"The people God saves are those who have been corrupted by Satan and thus came to have corrupt dispositions. They are not perfect people without the slightest blemish, nor are they people who live in a vacuum. For some, as soon as their corruption is revealed, they think, 'Yet again, I've resisted God; I've believed in Him for so many years, but I still haven't changed. God surely doesn't want me anymore!' What sort of attitude is this? They have given up on themselves and think that God does not want them anymore. Is this not a case of misunderstanding God? When you are so negative, it is easiest for Satan to find chinks in your armor, and once it has succeeded, the consequences are unimaginable. Therefore, no matter how much difficulty you are in or how negative you are feeling, you must never give up! While people's lives are developing and while they are being saved, they sometimes take the wrong path or go astray. They exhibit some immature states and behavior in their life for a while, or sometimes grow weak and negative, say the wrong things, slip and fall, or suffer a failure. From God's point of view, such things are all normal, and He would not make a fuss over them"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Entry Into Life Is Most Important to Faith in God).

The sister shared this fellowship with me: "We've all been deeply corrupted by Satan. We're arrogant, crafty, evil, and vicious. These satanic dispositions are deeply entrenched within all of us, and have even become our very natures. For this reason, our behavior and attitudes reveal

corruption at every pass. It used to really irk me: I had some understanding of my corrupt disposition and felt remorse after revealing it, so why would I do it again the next time? After reading God's words, I finally realized that my satanic disposition was really serious, and it dawned on me that a change in disposition isn't something that happens overnight. People can't just change after gaining a little self-awareness. Without the long-term judgment and chastisement of God's words, without being pruned and dealt with, and without trials and refinement, true change is impossible. The purpose of God's coming to perform judgment and chastisement is to purify and change us. He knows how deeply Satan has corrupted us, and He is aware of our stature and the difficulties we encounter with trying to change our dispositions, so He's forgiving and patient with those who pursue the truth. God hopes we have the resolve to pursue the truth, and that we wholeheartedly seek to change our dispositions. So, we must treat ourselves correctly. We have to eat and drink of God's words more, accept their judgment and chastisement, forsake the flesh, and put the truth into practice. Then one day, our corrupt dispositions are bound to change."

We then read another passage of God's words: **"As soon as it touches upon position, face, or reputation, everyone's heart leaps in anticipation, and each of you always wants to stand out, be famous, and be recognized. Everyone is unwilling to yield, always instead wishing to contend—even though contending is embarrassing and not allowed in God's house. However, without contention, you still are not content. When you see someone stand out, you feel jealous, hatred, and that it is unfair. 'Why can't I stand out? Why is it always that person who gets to stand out, and it's never my turn?' You then feel some resentment. You try to repress it, but you cannot. You pray to God and feel better for a while, but then as soon as you encounter this sort of situation**

again, you cannot overcome it. Does this not display an immature stature? Is not a person's falling into such states a trap? These are the shackles of Satan's corrupt nature that bind humans. ... You must learn to let go and set aside these things, to recommend others, and to allow them to stand out. Do not struggle or rush to take advantage the moment you encounter an opportunity to stand out or obtain glory. You must learn to back off, but must not delay the performing of your duty. Be a person who works in quiet obscurity, and who does not show off to others while you loyally perform your duty. The more you let go of your prestige and status, and the more you let go of your own interests, the more peaceful you will become, and the more space will open up within your heart and the more your state will improve. The more you struggle and compete, the darker your state will be. If you do not believe it, try it and see! If you want to turn this sort of state around, and not be controlled by these things, then you must first set them aside and give them up. Otherwise, the more you struggle, the more darkness will surround you, and the more jealousy and hatred you will feel, and your desire to obtain will only grow stronger. The stronger your desire to obtain, the less capable you will be to do so, and as you obtain less, your hatred will increase. As your hatred increases, you will grow darker inside. The darker you are inside, the more poorly you will perform your duty; the more poorly you perform your duty, the less useful you will be. This is an interlinked, vicious cycle. If you can never perform your duty well, then, gradually, you will be **eliminated"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Give Your True Heart to God, and You Can Obtain the Truth).

The sister's fellowshiping about God's words made me realize that my jealousy had arisen from having too strong a desire for name and status, and

that my disposition had been too arrogant. I had been instilled with the Chinese Communist Party's education and all kinds of satanic life philosophies and poisons from childhood, such as, "Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost," "Man struggles upwards; water flows downwards," and "Stand out above the rest, and bring honor to your ancestors." These satanic poisons had been planted deep within my heart, causing me to be arrogant, self-conceited, selfish, and contemptible. I had grown especially ambitious and aggressive; no matter what I did, I felt compelled to surpass others. I had been that way in society, and I had been that way in the church as well. Even while fellowshiping and praying during gatherings, I still just wanted to be better than other people, and the only times I had been happy were when others praised me. As soon as someone else proved to be better than I, I couldn't accept it, and would become jealous. Deep down, I would resist and work against that person. When I really couldn't surpass them, I would just dwell within negativity and misunderstanding, unable to treat myself properly. I would even misunderstand God, and thought that I couldn't be a target for God's salvation. I saw that Satan's corruption had made me arrogant and fragile, selfish and despicable, and my life became unspeakably miserable. From these words of God, I also found a path of practice: I must learn to let go, to set things aside, and to practice according to God's words. I must learn to forsake my own flesh and put aside my ego and status, and learn more from Sister Wang's strengths, and compensate for my own weaknesses. This is the only way to understand and gain more truths.

Later, I read this passage from God's words: **"The functions are not the same. There is one body. Each does his duty, each in his place and doing his very best—for each spark there is one flash of light—and seeking maturity in life. Thus will I be satisfied"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The

Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 21). Once I had read these words from God, I understood that because the caliber and the gifts that God bestows are different for each person, His requirements for each person are different. Actually, as long as we do everything in our power to fulfill our duties, God's heart will be consoled. Sister Wang is of good caliber and is so quick to understand the truth. Today God arranges for us to gather together, and His purpose is for us to learn from each other's strengths and compensate for our own weaknesses so that we can understand the truth and enter the reality of God's words together. I should properly handle my own strengths and shortcomings. No matter what kind of caliber God has ordained for me to have, I must submit to His rule and arrangements, rectify my motives, and pursue the truth with all my heart. I should fellowship however much I understand, and practice however much I know. I should do my utmost, and in this way, God will enlighten and guide me. To this end, I made the following resolution before God: From now on, I am willing to put effort into pursuit of the truth, stop being narrow-minded and jealous of people more capable than I, and live out the likeness of a true human being so as to fulfill God's will.

The next church gathering came around very quickly. I wanted to open up to my brothers and sisters about how jealous I had been of Sister Wang, and what aspects of my corrupt disposition that I had revealed, but as soon as I thought of it, I became afraid of how they would see me, and what Sister Wang would think of me if she knew how envious I had been of her. Deep down, I felt a bit reluctant to face the situation. Silently within myself, I prayed to God. I said, "Oh God! May You give me faith and courage. I am willing to put aside my vanity and status, share in fellowship openly with my brothers and sisters, and dissolve the barriers between us. May You, God, be my guide." After praying, I felt much more at peace, and so I spoke

of what state I had been in and about all I had been going through. After hearing me out, not only did my brothers and sisters not look down on me, but they all actually admired my courage at having been able to practice honesty. They said that my experience made them realize that only by practicing according to God's words could they cast off their own satanic corrupt dispositions and gain release and freedom. They also said they now knew what to do the next time they encountered such a situation. During subsequent gatherings, I discovered many of Sister Wang's strengths: When eating and drinking of God's words, she was able to integrate her own state in her fellowshiping. Whenever she encountered a problem, she was able to focus on coming before God and seeking His intentions, and on finding a path for practice from within His words. Only after seeing these strengths of hers did I understand that she was not my rival, but someone who could help me. Only then did I sense, from the bottom of my heart, that the purpose of God's arrangement for us to work together is for us to learn from each other's strengths in order to compensate for each other's weaknesses. When I thought of it that way, I felt completely emancipated. Now I feel that every gathering is a kind of enjoyment. I am no longer influenced by jealousy, but am able to draw on others' strengths to offset my own weaknesses, live in harmony with them, and feel released in spirit.

11. The Only Way to Live Like a Real Person

By Xincheng, China

I once read a novel by a Japanese writer which is about a salesman who managed to sell a hair growth serum, hair dye, pomade, hair thinner, and a hair trimmer to a painter who had little hair, saying it could solve his problems. The painter spent a lot of money but still ended up with the same nearly bald head. The writer used satire to expose the scams some unscrupulous salespeople use these days, warning people not to be taken in. This kind of thing is becoming worse and worse but no one can solve the problem. I used to be one of them, too. I'd lie and deceive customers to earn more money. I got more enmeshed in it and just couldn't stop. Then I accepted Almighty God's work of the last days and I understood some truths by reading Almighty God's words. My perspective was transformed and I started practicing the truth and being honest according to God's words. This is the only way to live openly and have a human likeness.

When I first opened up a hair salon, I swore I'd do business honestly. I did just that, never engaging in profiteering. I put my all into it for every customer's hair I did and my fees were lower than other hairstylists'. But after running myself ragged for a year, I was only left with 2,000-odd yuan after paying my rent, business taxes, utilities, heating fees, and so on. I had more business than the salons across the way but they were making a lot more money than me. I knew they were mostly making their money by ripping customers off, relying on base tactics for their ill-gotten gains. The truth is, sometimes I wanted to do what they were doing but I didn't feel good about earning money that way. As the old saying goes, "poor but proud." No matter how poor I was, I felt I had to keep my integrity. I gave it a lot of thought, but decided to keep doing business according to my

conscience and be a good person no matter how little I earned. Three years just flew by this way, and other hairdressers who'd begun at the same time as me had bought larger shops or were doing big business. Some of them even had their own cars, but I was in exactly the same position I'd been in three years before.

One day my dad got sick and was admitted to the hospital and his treatment was going to cost tens of thousands of yuan. I had hardly any savings. I borrowed as much money as I could, but could still only pay half the medical bill. Thinking about how much I'd borrowed and not knowing when I'd be able to pay it back launched a battle inside me: Should I raise my prices a little? What if I padded the bill a bit for well-off customers? Just when I was in this quandary, a friend of mine said to me, "All this suffering is just because you're so wedded to your honor. The other salon owners' annual profits are in the tens of thousands, but yours is just a few thousand. You're so bull-headed. If you want to repay those debts any time soon, you'll have to be smarter in your business. You'll need a few tricks up your sleeve to earn more money." After she left, the owner of a salon across the street came over and teased me: "You're really so good at running this salon! Business is good and you have a great reputation, but it's just it's not very profitable. You want to be Mother Theresa? If I had your skills, I would have gotten rich ages ago. You're just too honest. You need to be savvy to run a business, but you're exhausting yourself and hardly making anything. Doesn't everyone say 'Money makes the world go round' and 'Only a fool doesn't take money at his fingertips'? You should give it some thought." That night I was tossing and turning, unable to sleep. "What the two of them said does make some sense." I thought, "I do business totally honestly, so when will I make some money? Like they say, 'Money isn't everything, but without it, you can do nothing.' A penny can conquer even

a hero. Besides, my dad is sick in the hospital and I can't delay his treatment. For my dad's treatment and so I can repay my debts, employing a few tactics to make some money is understandable." I comforted myself that way and decided to start trying it out on wealthier customers.

The next day, a customer came in who wanted her hair permed. She looked really well-off judging by how she was dressed, so I figured I'd take advantage of the chance to earn a little extra. When she was paying I just asked for 200 yuan on the spot. To tell the truth, my heart was pounding because I usually charged only 120 yuan, so when I asked for that much, I wondered if she would accuse me of overcharging. If she said it was too expensive, I could lower the price a little. Feeling guilty, I couldn't even look her in the eye. She just readily handed over the money and even praised my skills. She was really happy with the hairdo and said it was worth any amount of money. She said she'd recommend me to her friends and family. After she left, I felt unsettled for quite a while. She had that much trust in me but I'd cheated her. It was so immoral. But then again, "Only a fool doesn't take money at his fingertips." Then there were my debts, too, so I just buried my feelings of guilt. From that day on, I changed my attitude toward doing business. Whenever I saw a well-off customer come in, I'd welcome them, full of smiles, and I'd recommend some particular services and products.

One time, a customer said she wanted to get her hair washed and styled, and I thought, "A hair wash is less than 10 yuan. I need to find a trick to get more money than that." So I told her, "Your hair is too dry. If you don't start taking care of it soon, it could start falling out, and hair is like a second face for women. If you develop issues with your hair, it'll be too late for regrets." She was convinced by everything I was saying and she spent 300 yuan on a set of anti-hair loss nourishing products and became a

regular for hot oil treatments. I felt a little uneasy after she left. I did have the money, but I wasn't sure how effective the product was. I'd talked it up, but what would I do if it didn't work well and she came back to complain? But there was no point worrying. I'd already sold it, so that was that. When I was cutting a customer's hair a few days later, she said she had dandruff and an itchy scalp. I thought, "I can recommend some of the shampoo I sell here so I can earn a little more money." I said tactfully, "Dandruff and an itchy scalp are caused by inflammation and if it gets serious you could start losing hair, which would impact how you feel about yourself." She quickly asked me what could be done about it, so as a matter of course, I recommended my anti-dandruff shampoo to her and I promised her it would work well. She bought the shampoo really happily. I charged her 68 yuan for a product that had cost me just 25 yuan and she thanked me over and over. I realized how easy it is to make money like that. No wonder the other salon owners had already gotten rich. I figured I could be rich in no time as well, and I wouldn't have to worry about my dad's hospital bills. In this way, the uneasiness in my heart gradually disappeared and I came to believe that the only way to make money was to lie and cheat.

Ten years passed in the blink of an eye. I'd made some money, all my debts were paid off, and I'd even bought a house and a car. I didn't know why, but even though I lived more comfortably, I just couldn't feel happy at all. I always had this empty, uneasy feeling. They say "As people act, Heaven watches," and "What goes around comes around." I was afraid all those customers I'd fooled would show up one day to settle the score with me, and then my reputation would be ruined. I was terrified at that thought and lived in fear. It was exhausting. I really wanted to go back to doing business honestly but I couldn't bring myself to do it. I was like a thief who'd developed a taste for it—I wanted to quit, but couldn't.

Just as I was struggling painfully, caught in a mire of sin, a friend shared Almighty God's gospel of the last days with me. She told me that God's words are all the truth and can resolve all of our difficulties, that they can heal the pain within our souls. After that, I started gathering and reading God's words with others, singing songs of praise, and I felt really at peace. One can't put a price on that kind of feeling. I set my resolve to practice my faith well.

In a gathering one time, brothers and sisters read a passage of God's words. **"Honesty means giving your heart to God, being genuine with God in all things, being open with Him in all things, never hiding the facts, not trying to deceive those above and below you, and not doing things only to curry favor with God. In short, to be honest is to be pure in your actions and words, and to deceive neither God nor man. ... If you have many confidences that you are reluctant to share, if you are highly averse to laying bare your secrets—your difficulties—before others to seek the way of the light, then I say that you are someone who will not attain salvation easily, and who will not easily emerge from the darkness"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Three Admonitions). This was really moving for me. I saw that God likes honest people and detests deceitful people. Being an honest person is the only way to get into His kingdom. The brothers and sisters were all pure and open. Even though there were times they'd lie to protect their own face or status, they were always able to reflect on themselves and be open and honest. Their lives were really free and liberated. I could feel that the church was nothing like the world. God likes honest people, and the more honest someone is, the more God likes them, but the more deceitful they are, the more He detests them. Only honest people can gain true happiness and joy. I really wanted to be an honest person, someone who God likes. But then I thought about

how I'm a businesswoman, and in this materialistic society where money is everything, doing business honestly not only means you can't earn money, but will be taken for a fool by others. There's just no way to keep a foothold in this society like that and in the end you'll just have to close your doors. But God's words clearly state that He likes honest people, and deceitful people can hardly be saved. If I didn't practice the truth like God requires but kept being underhanded, lying and cheating in my business, wouldn't that be disgusting to God? I thought about it over and over, and ultimately decided to act according to God's words, and practice telling the truth and being an honest person.

One day when I was cutting a customer's hair, she asked if her hair was dry, and if so, she wanted to get an oil treatment as well. I thought, "I can only make ten yuan from a haircut, but an oil treatment would mean at least another hundred. The customer herself has asked for it—I certainly haven't pushed anything extra on her to get more money." In fact, I took a look at her hair and saw that it wasn't dry at all, but if I told her the truth, she definitely wouldn't want to have it done. Just as I was feeling at a loss, these words of God occurred to me: **"To be honest is to be pure in your actions and words, and to deceive neither God nor man"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Three Admonitions). God's words gave me a timely reminder that honest people are practical and realistic in their words and deeds. They're not deceitful before God or before other people. Since I wanted to be an honest person, I should act in accordance with God's words and tell the truth. So, I told the customer, "Your hair isn't dry. Don't waste your money." She responded, surprised, "I'm surprised that you have such professional integrity. There are so few people in business like you these days. I'm definitely going to send everyone in my family here to get their hair done." I was thrilled to hear the customer say this—I thanked God over

and over. I experienced how wonderful, how sweet it is to be honest and tell the truth!

In the days that followed, I acted as an honest person in accordance with God's requirements. Before I knew it, all that fear, all that worry in my heart had just vanished and I no longer worried that someone would come back and complain. I slept soundly every night. I thought I could practice the truth and speak honestly. But to my surprise, my satanic dispositions and philosophies were deeply entrenched. When tempted by big profit, I went back to my old ways.

One day, five women came into the salon. They had just come back from a trip and their taxi driver recommended my salon, so they came straight here. One of the women said, "Price isn't an issue, just make sure you do a good job." Hearing her say this, I thought to myself, "It's practically in my pocket. I'll stretch the truth just this once and God should forgive me." So, I said the 160-yuan perms were 260 yuan and they didn't say a word. I made an extra 500 that way. I was really happy when I got the money, thinking I wouldn't need to worry about my store rent that month. But that night I felt gloomy and upset. I just tossed and turned, unable to sleep.

Later on, I thought about how I knew being an honest person was a positive thing and was related to how we conduct ourselves and whether we can be saved and get into God's kingdom. So why couldn't I put it into practice? What was the real reason? Seeking answers, I watched a video of a reading of God's words. Almighty God says, **"People in the past ran their business so that nobody was cheated; they sold items at the same price regardless of who was buying. Is not some element of good conscience and humanity conveyed here? When people conducted their**

business like this, in good faith, it can be seen that they still had some conscience and some humanity at that time. But with man's ever-increasing demand for money, people unknowingly came to love money, gain, and pleasure more and more. In short, people came to view money as more important than before. When people view money as more important, they unknowingly begin to attach less importance to their reputation, their renown, their good name and their integrity, do they not? When you engage in business, you see others using various means to swindle people and get rich. Although the money earned is ill-gotten, they become richer and richer. Though they may engage in the same business as you, their whole family enjoys life more than you do, and you feel bad, saying to yourself, 'Why can't I do that? Why can't I earn as much as they do? I must think of a way to get more money, to make my business prosper.' You then do your utmost to ponder how to make lots of money. According to the usual method of making money—selling things at the same price to all customers—any profit you make is made in good conscience. However, this is not the way to get rich quick. Driven by the urge to make a profit, your thinking undergoes a gradual transformation. During this transformation, your principles of conduct also begin to change. When you first cheat someone, you have your reservations, saying, 'This will be the only time I cheat someone. I will not do it again. I cannot cheat people. There are serious consequences to cheating. It will bring me lots of trouble!' When you first deceive someone, your heart has some scruples; this is the function of man's conscience—to make you feel scruples and to reproach you, so that it feels unnatural when you cheat someone. But after you have successfully deceived someone, you see that you now have more money than you did before, and you think this method can be very beneficial

for you. Despite the dull ache in your heart, you still feel like congratulating yourself on your success, and you feel somewhat pleased with yourself. For the first time, you approve of your own behavior, your own deceptive ways. Afterward, once man has been contaminated by this cheating, it is the same as someone who gets involved in gambling and then becomes a gambler. In your unawareness, you give approval to your own cheating behavior and accept it. In unawareness, you take cheating to be a legitimate commercial behavior and the most useful means for your survival and livelihood; you think that by doing this you can quickly make a fortune. This is a process: In the beginning, people cannot accept this type of behavior and they look down on this behavior and practice. Then they begin to experiment with this behavior themselves, trying it out in their own way, and their hearts begin to gradually transform. What kind of transformation is this? It is an approval and admission of this trend, of this idea instilled in you by the social trend. Without realizing it, if you do not cheat people when doing business with them, you feel you are worse off; if you do not cheat people, you feel as though you have lost something. Unknowingly, this cheating becomes your very soul, your backbone, and an indispensable type of behavior that is a principle in your life. After man has accepted this behavior and this thinking, has this not brought about a change in his heart? Your heart has changed, so has your integrity changed as well? Has your humanity changed? Has your conscience changed? (Yes.) Yes, every part of this person undergoes a qualitative change, from their heart to their thoughts, to such an extent that they are transformed from the inside out. This change pulls you further and further away from God, and you become more and more closely aligned with Satan; you become more and more alike to Satan”

(The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique VI). God's words all reflect reality. That's exactly how I was. At first I went by my conscience and did business honestly. But when my dad had to be hospitalized, urged on by my friend and colleague, I started to lie and cheat to earn more money. I ended up unable to stop myself. I wanted to stop but couldn't. I saw that was all caused by Satan's corruption. I'd been influenced by society and took Satan's philosophies like "Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost," "Money is first," "Money isn't everything, but without it, you can do nothing," and "Money makes the world go round" as my mottos. I followed evil trends instead of earning money honorably. I abandoned my basic standards of conduct for profit, learning how to tailor my approach to what I observed in others. I racked my brains and stopped at nothing to cheat customers, becoming more and more selfish, slippery, evil, and greedy. I lost the conscience, reason, and dignity a normal person should have. Even though I'd made some money from lying and cheating over the years, paying off my debts and living a more comfortable life, I hadn't experienced true happiness. I constantly felt guilty, always worried about being exposed for my lies and ruining my name. But I was still trapped in it and couldn't escape. After becoming a believer, even knowing that God likes honest people and resolving in prayer to practice God's words, when I was tempted by a significant sum of money I couldn't stop myself from lying and cheating. I saw just how deeply corrupted by Satan I was. I finally realized that these satanic philosophies for living are negative things that mislead and harm people. They corrupted me so much that I was becoming more and more evil and depraved. Living by these ideas and doing business dishonestly isn't the right path in life. Putting God's words into practice, and practicing the truth as God requires, as an honest person is the only right path in life!

I read this passage of God's words after that: **"How can one be an honest person? How does one practice being an honest person? (By not engaging in deceit and not being diluted when one speaks.) That is correct, and there are details within. What does 'not being diluted' mean? It means not to lie or harbor personal intentions and aims in what you say. If you harbor deceit or personal intentions and aims, then lies will naturally come forth. If you have no deceit or personal intentions or aims within you, then what you say will not be diluted, nor will it contain any lies; when you say 'yes,' it will mean 'yes,' and when you say 'no,' it will mean 'no.' To purify your heart first is the most crucial step. Once your heart is purified, the problems of your arrogance and deceitful lies will all be resolved. To be an honest person, one must clear their heart of these adulterations; having done so, it will be easy to be an honest person. Is it complicated to be an honest person? No, it is not. No matter how many states or corrupt dispositions there are within you, there is one truth that can resolve them all. Do not tell lies, call a spade a spade, practice in accordance with the truth, and be transparent in everything you do; live as a human being before God, and live in the light"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The Path to Resolving a Corrupt Disposition). I found a path of practice from God's words. First we have to set our motives straight, speak no lies and have no thought of deceit. We have to live out in the open, be worthy of people's respect and trust, and live out more and more of a human likeness. God likes and blesses honest people. That kind of person doesn't live in darkness or pain and they don't rack their brains to keep a lie going. They especially don't live every day in fear that their lies will come back to haunt them. Honest people aren't constrained like that, but they're free and at peace. Once I

understood its true meaning, I became willing to practice being an honest person as God requires.

The following day around noon, I was in the middle of cutting someone's hair when the woman I'd recommended the hair thickening treatment to before walked in pulling a long face. I thought, "It looks like she's going to cause some trouble. What if she says the product was no good and other customers hear it? That could have an impact on my business. What can I do to get her out of here?" Just as I was trying to figure out how to handle her, I thought of the words of God: **"Do not tell lies, call a spade a spade, practice in accordance with the truth, and be transparent in everything you do; live as a human being before God, and live in the light"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The Path to Resolving a Corrupt Disposition). I realized I could no longer lie or cheat and no matter what that woman had to say and no matter what other customers thought of me, whether I could earn money afterward or not, I had to be honest according to God's words and just speak the truth, then accept her complaint appropriately. Just as that was going through my mind, I heard her say angrily, "Didn't you say this hair thickener would help more hair grow? I haven't had a single strand of new hair. You were cheating me, weren't you?" I told her sincerely, "Some customers have said that this product is somewhat effective, and others have said that it isn't. I haven't used it myself, so I couldn't say. If you feel like it's not working, then don't use it anymore and I'll give you a refund." Hearing me say this, her anger vanished and she said with a smile, "I just wanted to know the truth of the matter. Since you're willing to be honest, there's no need for a refund. But still, even though my hair isn't any thicker from using this product, it is softer and shinier than before." Once she'd gone, I thought over what had just happened. I'd truly experienced that being honest and practicing the

truth isn't a disadvantage. Not only does it win others' respect and trust, but it feels good, too. This gave me more confidence in being an honest person.

One weekend my older sister came to the salon to get her hair washed while there was a customer who wanted her hair dyed. I took a look at her hair and told her, "You dyed it pretty recently. You should wait a while, because these dyes have chemicals in them that are bad for you." The customer responded with some surprise, "I just can't believe that there are people doing business this way. No wonder you're doing so well. Good character makes for a successful business!" After she left, my sister gave me a funny look and said, "Do you have a fever or something? That money was practically in your hands but you didn't take it." I said calmly, "Our conduct affects our business. How can someone who's not a good person run a good business? You can earn money quickly by being unscrupulous, but not for long. I do things completely above board now and I feel much better earning money with conscience." My sister smiled and said, "That wasn't how you did business before at all. You've really changed." Seeing her look of wonder, I thanked God over and over. It was all because of God's words, and I got to taste the serenity of being an honest person and telling the truth.

After that, my salon was hopping every weekend and holiday, and a lot of people came in because of word of mouth or a friend's recommendation. I used to think I'd never get a foothold in business without telling some lies and that people would laugh at me. But I finally saw how ridiculous, how absurd that notion is. Going by satanic philosophies brings temporary gain and leaves nothing but emptiness and pain. It's a despicable, vile way to live, without any human likeness. Now I focus on practicing the truth, speaking honestly and living uprightly. Not only have I gained others' respect and trust, but I personally feel at peace. It's a wonderful way to live!

The small change I've undergone now is all thanks to God's words. Thanks be to Almighty God!

12. Only Honesty Brings Human Likeness

By Shizai, China

My husband and I are in the office furniture business. We started out doing business really honestly, doing exactly what customers asked, without mixing in anything counterfeit. But a year went by and after all the fees we had to pay, we only had just enough to live on. The owners of the store next door were in the same business, but they earned a lot more than us. I was confused: Why couldn't we ever make as much as them? I wanted to go watch and learn, to see how they were making their money. One day a customer came into their store and ordered a sofa, a front desk, and a table and wanted them all to be top of the line. I saw the owner promise them it would all be of the best quality, but as soon as the customer left, he took third-rate products from their factory and substituted them for the first-rate products and sent them off to the customer. He made over 10,000 yuan in no time at all. Seeing them employ this kind of tactic was really shocking for me. I thought, "So that's how they do it! Isn't that cheating the customer? That's not a very honest way to do business." But then I thought, "We're in the same business but they're making more and living a better life while we're just getting by. There's too much of a disparity." I figured I could learn a few things from them. So to make more money, I started ignoring my conscience and selling things like the neighbors did.

One time a customer came in to stock up on office supplies and asked for everything to be high quality. I assured him over and over, saying it would be nothing but the best and would have a lifetime guarantee so he'd feel comfortable making the purchase from us. After he left, I switched out what he'd chosen for third-rate products that looked exactly like the good ones because they cost a lot less money. I felt really uneasy while delivering

the order. I thought, “If he finds out and demands a refund, it won’t be just losing money. He’ll accuse me of being a swindler right to my face.” This thought made me feel even more nervous. My heart beat faster and I couldn’t even look him in the eye. I was surprised when he checked the order and didn’t notice anything and I could finally relax a bit. When that bill was settled, I’d made extra tens of thousands, and even though I did have feelings of guilt coming up and knew it was dishonest and unethical, I couldn’t help but feel secretly pleased at earning that much money so quickly. After a while, my constant lying and cheating did cause quite a few problems for me. Sometimes when I sold something counterfeit, the customer would later call me to have it fixed. But that fake stuff didn’t have any after-sales service, so I’d have to find all sorts of excuses to put them off. Sometimes someone would say angrily, “You business owners don’t take any responsibility after selling something. You’re completely untrustworthy!” Hearing a customer say something like this wasn’t easy for me, but then I’d figure everyone else did business that way, so wasn’t it perfectly normal? That feeling of guilt gradually disappeared.

A few years went by and even though I’d earned some money and was living more comfortably, I didn’t feel any joy in my heart. Instead I just felt on edge all the time because I’d sold so much counterfeit stuff, afraid of the day a customer would find out there was a quality issue and call to demand a refund or report me. That would cost me a lot of money. It could also cost me my reputation, and people might talk behind my back. Hoping to avoid this, I was constantly thinking about how I should smooth things over if I ever did get that kind of call. Living that way was exhausting for me. I often thought, “If I just do business honestly and order what the customer asks for without giving them second-best, I wouldn’t have to worry about this all the time. But there’s so much overhead for my business and home. If I do

business honestly, getting what customers request, I wouldn't make much money. Don't they say 'There's no such thing as an honest businessman'? Isn't that just the way things are these days? I can't earn enough without cheating so I'll just focus on the money." And so, even though my conscience sometimes felt uneasy, I kept using underhanded business tactics to earn more money.

In 2004, my sister-in-law shared Almighty God's work of the last days with me. By reading God's words I became certain it was God's work of the last days and started living the church life. One day I read this in God's words: **"My kingdom requires those who are honest, those who are not hypocritical or deceitful. Are not the sincere and honest people unpopular in the world? I am just the opposite. It is acceptable for the honest people to come to Me; I delight in this kind of person, and I also need this kind of person. This is precisely My righteousness"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 33). **"You ought to know that God likes those who are honest. In essence, God is faithful, and so His words can always be trusted; His actions, furthermore, are faultless and unquestionable, which is why God likes those who are absolutely honest with Him"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Three Admonitions). Reading this, I learned that God likes honest people and He requires us to be honest and upright in our words and deeds. We shouldn't deceive or cheat God or man. I thought, "Being honest is all well and good and it's a peaceful, relaxing way to live. But in this money-obsessed society, honest people just look like idiots to others. Particularly for those of us in business, cheating customers is an open secret. If I'm totally honest, I won't earn any money, then I won't make a living. Someone might even take me for dumb and cheat me. But God requires us to be honest people, so what should I do?" I thought of a compromise. I

would speak and act totally honestly in the church with brothers and sisters. I wouldn't need to be on my guard and no one would laugh at me. But I couldn't be an honest person at work. So, I started putting that into practice.

One day a customer came and ordered 120 desks and chairs. All the floor models he chose were good quality and didn't smell like formaldehyde. I was thinking, "I'll switch out what he ordered for another factory's products, which look exactly the same as the ones he wanted, even though the quality is lower and they do smell of formaldehyde. Then I'll make an extra 1,200 yuan." I figured I'd sell him the lower quality furniture. But then I thought about formaldehyde being harmful, and I felt uneasy. But then again, I knew all the other shops did business that way. If I didn't cheat him, he'd just go somewhere else and be cheated there. I figured I may as well earn that money. So, with an easy conscience, I put in his order for counterfeit products. When I made the delivery a few days later, the customer was suspicious of the quality and the smell. He asked me, "Isn't this stuff dangerous? How can you do business this way? I don't want these things anymore!" I wanted to negotiate with him and give him a better deal just as long as he kept everything. But he didn't even give me a chance to speak, but said very firmly and resolutely that he wanted to return it all. I had no choice but to take all 120 of those desks and chairs back. I was miserable after I got home. I was thinking that doing things dishonestly was hard work and took a lot of resources. It wasn't just the money, but my reputation and dignity had been damaged. I was reaping what I had sown. If I did things the way God required and not sell counterfeit products, although I wouldn't make as much money, no one would get upset with me, and I wouldn't wear myself out or feel on edge. By being underhanded I was hurting myself as well as others! I came before God to pray, saying, "Oh God! You require us to be honest people but I'm still being dishonest

in my business. What happened today was Your discipline and I've had enough of the bitterness of living this way. I don't want to cheat people anymore. I want You to guide me to be honest. I'm ready to strive to meet Your requirements."

Then one day in my devotionals, I read this in God's words: **"I am the God who examines the innermost heart of man. Do not act one way to others' faces but another way behind their backs; I see clearly everything you do, and though you may fool others, you cannot fool Me. I see it all clearly. It is not possible for you to conceal anything; all lies within My hands"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 44). **"Do you think nothing will happen to you after you have cheated someone out of money? Do you think that after having swindled that money away, you will not face any consequences? Such would be impossible; there will indeed be consequences! Regardless of who they are or whether or not they believe that there is a God, all individuals must take responsibility for their own behavior and bear the consequences of their actions"** (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique X). **"That God asks for people to be honest proves that He truly loathes those who are deceitful, and that He does not like deceitful people. The fact that God does not like deceitful people means that He dislikes their actions, disposition, and motivations; that is, He does not like the way they do things. Therefore, if we are to please God, we must first change our actions and the way in which we exist. Previously, we relied on lies and pretense to live among people, using these as our capital and as the existential basis, life, and foundation by which we conducted ourselves. This was something that God despised"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The Most Fundamental Practice of Being an Honest Person).

I could feel from God's words that God's disposition is righteous, holy, and tolerates no offense. He scrutinizes our every word and deed and ultimately we all get what we deserve according to what we've done. I could get away with cheating to make more money for a while, but I'd reap the bitter fruit later on. I'd go to hell and be punished after I died. That's a heavenly law. I saw how foolish I'd been. I thought I could be honest with brothers and sisters but be deceitful in my business to curry favor with God and then be blessed later without damaging my interests in the meantime. I could fool people with my little tricks, but not God. I'd paid quite a bit of money for those desks and chairs. That was God's discipline, but He was also warning and saving me. Otherwise I'd have continued indulging myself and being dishonest and I definitely would have gotten my retribution in the end. This thought left me feeling a little bit afraid and I started to reflect on myself. Thinking back over my years in business, I'd ignored my conscience to make more money, exchanging the good-quality products customers ordered for inferior ones. I'd lied and cheated, and persisted in misrepresenting poor-quality goods as higher quality. Even after gaining faith, knowing full well that God requires us to be honest, to not cheat man or God, I still cheated and lied to customers to make a buck, earning dishonest money. I'd stop at nothing for the sake of money. I was running a shady business, cheating people, corrupted by Satan and devoid of conscience or reason. I was crafty, selfish, and despicable, living like a demon without any human likeness. It was just like what the Lord Jesus said: **"You are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father you will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and stayed not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it"** (John 8:44). **"But let your communication be, Yes, yes; No, no: for whatever is more than these**

comes of evil” (Matthew 5:37). Only the devil is always lying and cheating, and that’s what I was doing. Didn’t I have the devil’s likeness? Where was my human likeness? Thinking this, I felt so disgusted with myself. I didn’t want to lie for my own benefit anymore. I later read these words of God: **“Be an honest person; pray to God to rid you of the deception in your heart. Purify yourself through prayer at all times, be moved by the Spirit of God through prayer, and your disposition will gradually change”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Concerning the Practice of Prayer). **“Honesty means giving your heart to God, being genuine with God in all things, being open with Him in all things, never hiding the facts, not trying to deceive those above and below you, and not doing things only to curry favor with God. In short, to be honest is to be pure in your actions and words, and to deceive neither God nor man”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Three Admonitions). God’s words gave me a path of practice. I knew I had to rely on God in my effort to become an honest person, and pray to God about my difficulties to be freed of my corrupt disposition. I also had to pray when something in business touched upon money or upon my interests, accept God’s scrutiny, and be an upright person. I had to call a spade a spade, and seek truth from facts in word and deed. I prayed when I realized all this, willing to accept God’s scrutiny and put His words into practice.

Not long after, a customer came to order some metal cabinets. He asked for above-average quality cabinets with a sturdy construction. At the time, I thought, “If I place this order just like he wants, I won’t earn much money after overhead and costs. If I find him something a little flimsier and he doesn’t notice, I could get 10,000 yuan or more out of it. How about I just order something not quite as sturdy?” Just as I was hemming and hawing, I remembered the consequences of all the times I’d cheated people.

Not only had I not earned anything, but I'd lost money and felt terrible. I also thought about how honest people bring God joy and are blessed by Him and that He requires us to tell the absolute truth. I couldn't ignore my conscience and do something dishonest just for money. I realized that encountering this again was God testing me to see if I could practice in line with the resolution I'd made before God. I prayed to God, asking Him to protect me from temptation and give me the strength to practice the truth and forsake myself, and to be an honest person who delights God. I felt stronger after my prayer. I ordered the metal cabinets for him just as he had asked and even though I didn't earn as much, I had a real sense of peace in my heart. I also felt how wonderful it is to practice honesty in accordance with God's words. It wasn't taxing and I wasn't worried about what would happen.

I read these words from God later: **“Born into such a filthy land, man has been severely blighted by society, he has been influenced by feudal ethics, and he has been taught at ‘institutes of higher learning.’ The backward thinking, corrupt morality, mean view on life, despicable philosophy for living, utterly worthless existence, and depraved lifestyle and customs—all of these things have severely intruded upon man’s heart, and severely undermined and attacked his conscience. As a result, man is ever more distant from God, and ever more opposed to Him. ... Even when they hear the truth, those who live in darkness give no thought to putting it into practice, nor are they inclined to seek out God even if they have beheld His appearance. How could a mankind so depraved have any chance of salvation? How could a mankind so decadent live in the light?”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. To Have an Unchanged Disposition Is to Be in Enmity to God). **“Until people have experienced God’s work and gained the truth, it is Satan’s nature**

that takes charge and dominates them from within. What, specifically, does that nature entail? For example, why are you selfish? Why do you protect your own position? Why do you have such strong emotions? Why do you enjoy those unrighteous things? Why do you like those evils? What is the basis for your fondness for such things? Where do these things come from? Why are you so happy to accept them? By now, you have all come to understand that the main reason behind all these things is that Satan's poison is within you. As for what Satan's poison is, it can be fully expressed with words. For example, if you ask some evildoers why they committed evil, they will answer, 'Because it's every man for himself, and the devil take the hindmost.' This single phrase expresses the very root of the problem. Satan's logic has become people's lives. They may do things for this purpose or that, but they are only doing it for themselves. Everyone thinks that since it is every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost, people should live for their own sakes, and do everything in their power to secure a good position for the sake of food and fine clothing. 'Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost'—this is the life and the philosophy of man, and it also represents human nature. These words of Satan are precisely the poison of Satan, and when people internalize it, it becomes their nature. Satan's nature is exposed through these words; they represent it completely. This poison becomes people's lives as well as the foundation of their existence, and corrupted humanity has been consistently dominated by this poison for thousands of years" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. How to Walk the Path of Peter). God's words helped me realize why I couldn't stop myself from lying and cheating. It was because I was so deeply corrupted by Satan. Satan uses our society and formal education to steep us in satanic laws like, "Every man for himself

and the devil take the hindmost,” “Money isn’t everything, but without it, you can do nothing,” “Money makes the world go round,” and “Money is first.” There’s also “There’s no such thing as an honest businessman.” They’d gotten inside of me and become my nature. So I ended up worshiping money and step by step, I abandoned my most basic standards of conduct for the sake of profit. I became more and more evil, greedy, and self-interested. I was so selfish and deceitful. In doing business, I substituted inferior goods for the good-quality ones and did harm without acknowledging it. I put money and my personal interests above all else, even selling out my own conscience and integrity. I’d lost all normal humanity. I’d earned a lot of money that way, but I didn’t feel happy at all. Instead, I always felt exhausted and on edge. It was a painful way to live. Then I finally realized it was all because Satan had corrupted me, because I’d lived by Satan’s laws for survival. I also realized why the world is so dark and evil these days. It’s because everyone lives by Satan’s poisons like “Man will do anything to get rich” and “Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost.” So they idolize money, fame, and status, lust for evil pleasures, becoming more and more selfish, greedy, and evil. People fight each other over money and gain, hurting and cheating each other, stopping at nothing. Even family and friends are no exception. No one cares about conscience or integrity anymore, and they hardly seem human. Our society, so tightly within Satan’s grasp, is like a vat of dye, a meat grinder. Without faith in God, there’s no way to know the truth of how Satan corrupts mankind or to escape its dark influence. We only become more corrupt and depraved, and are ultimately devoured by Satan. That’s the consequence of Satan corrupting and hurting us. Realizing this, I truly gave thanks for God’s protection and salvation. Without the guidance, sustenance, and judgment of Almighty God’s words, I wouldn’t have

known the significance of being an honest person. I wouldn't have realized the essence and consequences of constantly lying, either. I would have continued to live under Satan's grasp, always cheating, hardly living like a human being. No matter how much money I earned, I'd still end up punished in hell. From then on, I practiced being truthful and honest in my business. Sometimes I was really tempted by money and still thought about deceiving and cheating people, but I knew God hated that and people didn't like it, either. I'd pray to God to forsake my wrong motives and practice being an honest person. To my surprise, when I did that, I didn't earn any less. My business improved and I had more and more customers. I earned people's respect and some return customers trusted me, so they wouldn't even come in to look at things, but would just order over the phone. I felt more and more how relaxing, how free and secure it feels to be honest and practice God's words.

One time a customer came and ordered 500 metal cabinets, asking for the materials to be 0.7 mm thick. I didn't hesitate at all, but just placed the order exactly as he had requested. Surprisingly, he got out a microcaliper to check the thickness when everything was delivered, but I was totally calm, free from worry or fear. After measuring it, he said, "You're really trustworthy. A lot of people just want to earn money and can't be trusted. There aren't enough people like you anymore. I'll be ordering more from you in the future." Hearing him say this, I felt even more deeply how great it is to be honest as God's words say. It's just as God's words say: **"The future direction will be thus: Those who gain the utterances from God's mouth will have a path to walk on earth, and be they businessmen or scientists, or educators or industrialists, those who are without God's words will have a hard time taking even a single step, and will be forced to seek the true way. This is what is meant by, 'With the truth**

you will walk the entire world; without the truth, you will get nowhere”” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Millennial Kingdom Has Arrived). I give thanks for God’s salvation!

13. The Fight to Be an Honest Person

By Wei Zhong, China

A few years ago, I opened an appliance repair shop. I wanted to be an honest businessman and just earn a little money so my family had enough. But after some time spent being constantly busy, I saw that I'd made just enough money for the family to get by, and there was no way to save. Sometimes my monthly earnings were even less than an entry-level worker. My wife was always complaining to me about it, saying that I was too honest and didn't know how to do business. My brother-in-law was on my case, too. He said, "We live in the age of money, and no matter how you do it, you have to get people to hand over their money to be seen as capable." He also said things like "No wealth is without wiliness" and "Money makes the world go round" to get me to wake up and follow the trend, do business like others and not be so stubborn. I thought they did have a point, but I just couldn't bring myself to cheat my customers. I felt I could never reconcile that with my conscience.

I later noticed that Mr. Qian, the owner of an appliance repair shop near my shop, hardly had any technical skills. He could only fix some minor little issues, but he had a big sign hanging out front that said "First-rate Repairs for All Appliances." He attracted a lot of business that way. He'd accept a job and fix it himself if it was simple. Otherwise, he'd just send it to another repair place and take a cut for himself. He made quite a bit of money that way. Once when we were chatting, he told me how he made his money. He said that when a little part in an appliance breaks, you can just replace all of the components so you can charge more money. Customers don't know any better. He said we're living in a money-oriented society, and "It doesn't matter whether a cat is white or black, as long as it

catches mice.” He also said that being able to make money means you’re capable, otherwise, it doesn’t matter how good of a person you are, you’ll be looked down on. After hearing this guy’s “brilliant insight,” I thought, “This is the age we live in. Other people will do anything for money and there’s no such thing as integrity, so what good is it if I’m the only honest one? Besides, doing my business honestly hasn’t gotten me anywhere. This guy fixes things just like me and he lives a good life. His entire family lives well, but I’m just making enough money for us to get by. Looks like I have been too headstrong. I should find ways to make more money so my family can have a better life.” After that, I started learning from the “successes” of my colleagues and using underhanded means to cheat my customers. I felt unsettled, but I didn’t dwell on it so that I could make more money.

A customer came in for a repair one day. As I was taking out the faulty part, I went ahead and took out a few that were perfectly fine so she would think more of them were broken, and she’d be none the wiser when I charged her more. That old saying, “As guilty as a thief,” is so true. At first, I was really nervous and my heart was pounding, afraid she’d see through it and call me out on the spot. That would be humiliating. But I just put on a calm face and replaced all those components. When it came time to pay, I just callously charged her 50% more than my quote. I kept my head down the whole time, not daring to look her in the eyes, but to my surprise, she paid it without a word. I finally breathed a sigh of relief after she left. My face and back were covered with sweat and I felt a strange sense of unease. But when I saw that extra money I’d gotten, that feeling quickly disappeared.

From then on I started thinking of all sorts of tricks to overcharge customers. I had a guilty conscience at first, but I quietly encouraged myself so I could keep earning extra. I thought, “I can’t get too soft—‘As a

small mind makes no gentleman, a real man is not without venom.’ I have to be clever if I want to earn money. Besides, everyone does it, not just me.” After a while, that sense of guilt faded and I became more adept and sophisticated in my money-making “skills.” I also learned how to read people and test the waters, treating different people differently. I learned more tricks. When a well-off customer came in, I’d pander to them, saying what they wanted to hear and flattering them so it would be easier for me to charge them more. When I had a really anxious customer, I’d pretend the repair was a big pain and really involved, then intentionally take more time. That way they’d just offer me more money. Some customers were more astute, so I’d think of a reason to have them leave their appliance with me and pick it up another day, and when they came back I’d say I’d found other problems. I was making more money without spending much effort. And so, I constantly racked my brains to overcharge customers. I was making a lot more money and leading a more comfortable life, but I didn’t feel any happiness or joy in my heart. Instead, whenever I thought about the despicable, unethical things I did, I felt afraid and uneasy. Sometimes I’d think, “I should just stop. I shouldn’t conduct this shady business anymore. Like they say, ‘Good is repaid with good, and evil with evil.’ I’ll get what I’m due.” But then when I thought about all that cash in my hands, I just couldn’t resolve to stop.

Just as I was falling further into depravity and numbness, my sister shared Almighty God’s kingdom gospel with me. After accepting God’s work, I started gathering with brothers and sisters and reading God’s words frequently. I read these words from Almighty God in a gathering once: **“Man has walked through these periods together with God, yet he knows not that God rules the fate of all things and living beings, nor how God orchestrates and directs all things. This has eluded man from**

time immemorial to the present day. As for why, it is not because the deeds of God are too hidden, nor because the plan of God has yet to be realized, but because the heart and spirit of man are too distant from God, to the point where man remains in the service of Satan even as he follows God—and still doesn't know it. No one actively seeks out God's footsteps and the appearance of God, and no one is willing to exist in the care and keeping of God. Instead, they wish to rely on the corrosion of Satan, the evil one, in order to adapt to this world, and to the rules of existence that wicked mankind follows. At this point, the heart and spirit of man have become man's tribute to Satan and become Satan's foodstuff. Even more, the human heart and spirit have become a place in which Satan can reside and its fitting playground. Thus does man unknowingly lose his understanding of the principles of being human, and of the value and meaning of human existence. The laws of God and the covenant between God and man gradually fade away in man's heart, and he ceases to seek or pay heed to God. With the passage of time, man no longer understands why God created him, nor does he understand the words from the mouth of God and all that comes from God. Man then begins to resist the laws and decrees of God, and his heart and spirit become deadened.... God loses the man that He originally created, and man loses the root he originally had: **This is the sorrow of this human race**" (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God Is the Source of Man's Life). God's words reflect reality. Even though I'd earned quite a bit of money out in the world and my physical comforts were better than before, I was empty and in pain inside, and it was all because I'd distanced myself from God, gone against His requirements for man, and lived by Satan's rules for survival. When I first opened the store, I made money with a clear conscience, and even though I didn't earn much, I was

at peace. But then I was influenced by my environment. Seeing others getting rich in underhanded ways, I also started taking in “No wealth is without wiliness,” “Money makes the world go round,” and “Money isn’t everything, but without it, you can do nothing,” and other such rules for survival from Satan. I followed evil trends and abandoned my own basic principles to make money, ignoring my conscience to dupe customers so they’d fork over more money. The money was in my hands, but it was all ill-gotten. Whenever I thought about those despicable, immoral things I’d done, I felt terrible about myself and couldn’t find any peace. I lived in fear of the day someone would expose me, when I’d be denounced. Worst case scenario, I could even be reported to the police. I was constantly on edge. It was a painful way to live. But that day I understood that it was all because I was living by a satanic philosophy. It was the consequence of being bound and fooled by Satan’s rules. Without the guidance of God’s words, I never would have seen the reality of how Satan was harming me.

A sister then read a couple of passages of God’s words for me: **“You ought to know that God likes those who are honest. In essence, God is faithful, and so His words can always be trusted; His actions, furthermore, are faultless and unquestionable, which is why God likes those who are absolutely honest with Him. Honesty means giving your heart to God, being genuine with God in all things, being open with Him in all things, never hiding the facts, not trying to deceive those above and below you, and not doing things only to curry favor with God. In short, to be honest is to be pure in your actions and words, and to deceive neither God nor man”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Three Admonitions). **“My kingdom requires those who are honest, those who are not hypocritical or deceitful. Are not the sincere and honest people unpopular in the world? I am just the opposite. It is acceptable for the**

honest people to come to Me; I delight in this kind of person, and I also need this kind of person. This is precisely My righteousness” (The Word,

Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 33).

Then she shared this fellowship: “God is faithful in essence. He likes and blesses those who are honest. In our dealings with others in the world, we live by Satan’s law, ‘Never lift a finger without a reward.’ Our words and deeds are all for personal gain, and we lie and deceive without compunction. We don’t know what it means to be a good person. But faith in God is different today. He requires us to be honest people, to tell the truth, and be upright. He asks that we accept His scrutiny in our every word and every deed, that we be open and aboveboard, and not try to deceive or cheat God or man. Only honest people have a true human likeness, and only they can bear witness to and glorify God.” I learned from God’s words that He likes honest people and I had to act according to His requirements. I started practicing speaking honestly with brothers and sisters, and not deceiving them, but I was still worried when doing business. I felt that it was easier to practice being an honest person with brothers and sisters, but if I did that in my business, I’d earn a lot less and I might even have to shut down. But if I kept cheating and deceiving people like before, wouldn’t that be against God’s will? So, what should my practice be? I thought it over at length and found a compromise: I’d be an honest person at church, but I’d keep on with business as usual in my store.

One day an older man came in with his TV, saying that the picture seemed dimmer. I took a look and saw the color tubes were getting old and needed replacing, but I didn’t tell him the truth. I just increased the filament voltage so he could use it a little longer, then I could change them when the problem recurred. That way I’d earn an extra 30 yuan for the repair. Two weeks later, the TV did indeed have a problem and the man asked me to

repair it again, saying I hadn't done a good job. I told him that the color tubes were old and needed replacing. To my surprise, he saw through my little scheme. He withheld the 30 yuan repair fee and said reprovably, "Young man, doing business calls for honesty. Don't get too greedy!" I felt really embarrassed at the time but then shrugged it off without further thought. An older lady later came in with a broken microwave, and I found one small broken part in it. I figured I could fix it and then collect a reasonable fee. But then I thought about how she was pretty well-off, so charging her a little more wouldn't be a big deal. You have to take what you can get. But she came back to the store a few days later and said, "You charged me a hefty sum for that microwave. Have a conscience. Heaven sees what we do!" I felt really bad after being dressed down by her and I thought again about what that man had said. I felt pretty upset. I also realized that God was using the things around me to warn me so that I would reflect on and know myself.

After that, I read this in God's words: **"Regardless of what you are doing, how big or small a matter is, and whether you are doing it to fulfill your duty in God's family or for your own private reasons, you must consider whether what you are doing conforms with God's will, as well as whether it is something that a person with humanity should do. If you seek the truth like that in everything you do, then you are a person who truly believes in God. If you devoutly treat every matter and every truth in this way, then you will be able to achieve changes in your disposition. Some people think that when they are doing something personal, they can just ignore the truth, do it as they wish, and do it in whatever way makes them happy and in whatever manner is advantageous to them. They do not give the slightest consideration to how it might affect God's family, nor do they consider whether or not**

what they are doing befits saintly propriety. Finally, once they are finished with the matter, they grow dark inside and feel uncomfortable, though they do not know why. Is this retribution not deserved? If you do things that are not approved by God, then you have offended God. If someone does not love the truth, and frequently does things based on their own will, then they will frequently offend God. Such people are ordinarily not approved by God in what they do, and if they do not repent, then punishment will not be very far off” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Seeking God’s Will Is for the Sake of Practicing the Truth).

“Until people have experienced God’s work and gained the truth, it is Satan’s nature that takes charge and dominates them from within. What, specifically, does that nature entail? For example, why are you selfish? Why do you protect your own position? Why do you have such strong emotions? Why do you enjoy those unrighteous things? Why do you like those evils? What is the basis for your fondness for such things? Where do these things come from? Why are you so happy to accept them? By now, you have all come to understand that the main reason behind all these things is that Satan’s poison is within you. As for what Satan’s poison is, it can be fully expressed with words. For example, if you ask some evildoers why they committed evil, they will answer, ‘Because it’s every man for himself, and the devil take the hindmost.’ This single phrase expresses the very root of the problem. Satan’s logic has become people’s lives. They may do things for this purpose or that, but they are only doing it for themselves. Everyone thinks that since it is every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost, people should live for their own sakes, and do everything in their power to secure a good position for the sake of food and fine clothing. ‘Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost’—this

is the life and the philosophy of man, and it also represents human nature. These words of Satan are precisely the poison of Satan, and when people internalize it, it becomes their nature. Satan's nature is exposed through these words; they represent it completely. This poison becomes people's lives as well as the foundation of their existence, and corrupted humanity has been consistently dominated by this poison for thousands of years" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. How to Walk the Path of Peter). Reading this, I could really see that God's Spirit sees all. I'd never shared my innermost feelings with anyone, but they were fully revealed in God's words. I understood from God's words that He requires us to give our hearts to Him. Whether we're doing our duty in God's house or handling our own affairs, we have to practice His words. But I was selectively practicing the truth in my life. I saw God and brothers and sisters liked it when I put being honest into practice in the church, so I was willing to do that. But in my business, I thought I'd lose money and it wouldn't serve my interests, so I didn't do it. I saw I'd only considered my personal interests. I knew being deceitful wasn't in line with God's will, but I still did whatever I wanted, whatever would serve my own interests. How was that being a person of faith? Then it really dawned on me that "Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost" and "Man will do anything to get rich" are satanic rules for survival that had taken hold of me and become my nature. I'd thought I couldn't possibly get by if I didn't live according to them. But in reality, by living that way, I just got some personal gain and material enjoyment. But it was a vile way to live, without any dignity whatsoever. People resented and spurned me, and God loathed and hated me even more. I thought of what the Lord Jesus said: **"Truly I say to you, Except you be converted, and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven"** (Matthew 18:3). And Almighty

God says: **“Write off all those ideas and calculations of yours as soon as possible, and start treating My requirements seriously; otherwise, I will turn everyone to ash in order to bring an end to My work and, at worst turn My years of work and suffering into nothing, for I cannot bring My enemies and those people who reek of evil and have Satan’s appearance into My kingdom or take them into the next age”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Transgressions Will Lead Man to Hell). God is holy and righteous, and He wants to gain honest people. Those who are always lying and deceiving, those with satanic dispositions, who resist God by nature and refuse to repent will be destroyed by God. They’ll never get into His kingdom. If I still didn’t repent, but kept living by Satan’s philosophies and rules, being crooked and doing injustice, I’d end up eliminated. At that thought, I quickly prayed to God, “Almighty God! I believe in You, but You haven’t had a place in my heart. I’ve still been living by Satan’s rules. I don’t want to be deceitful anymore. I want to repent and be an honest person.”

One time after that, a couple of young people carried a TV into my shop to get it fixed. As I was working on it, I overheard them talking quietly right outside: “We wouldn’t have wasted those two days if we’d known that place was no good. Let’s see if this guy can fix it.” Hearing this, I thought, “Other shop owners would go in for the kill if they heard that, so I could easily ask them for an extra 20 or 30 yuan. It would be a shame not to take money that lands in my lap. I can be an honest person next time. God won’t make a fuss because I don’t practice the truth just this once.” But then I remembered what I’d resolved before God, and I thought of God’s words: **“If someone does not love the truth, and frequently does things based on their own will, then they will frequently offend God. Such people are ordinarily not approved by God in what they do, and if they do not**

repent, then punishment will not be very far off' (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Seeking God's Will Is for the Sake of Practicing the Truth). I felt that was God warning me. I couldn't keep knowingly doing wrong. I had to repent and be an honest person. And so, I just collected the regular fee after I fixed it. When I saw happy smiles on the customers' faces, I felt that being open and aboveboard was such a freeing way to live.

Another time when I fixed a lady's TV, the repair fee was 50 yuan, but she gave me 100 and didn't want change. I declined, however, I felt puzzled. Why on earth was she being so generous? Then she told me, "The first person I went to said the motherboard was done for and wanted 400 yuan to replace it, but I didn't go for it. An acquaintance later recommended you, saying you were honest and wouldn't overcharge customers. Now I can see that really is the case." Hearing her say this, I thought, "It's not that I'm a good person at all, it's that God's words changed me so I can live out a human likeness."

My perspective on things also shifted from reading God's words and practicing being an honest person. I used to think there was no way to be an honest businessman, that I couldn't earn money, and that I'd operate at a loss and have to shut down. But after I started being honest according to God's words, I not only wasn't operating at a loss, but had more customers by the day. Some even came from really far away, all saying they'd been recommended by someone. I'd never advertised in any way or asked others to push business my way. It was all because I practiced God's words, because I was honest and had integrity like God requires, only earning an honest buck, that I earned the customers' trust. It really was God's blessing from practicing the truth. This makes me think of another passage of God's words. Almighty God says, **"When people live in this world, under the influence of Satan's corruption, it is impossible for them to be honest;**

they can only become ever more deceitful. However, can we or can we not exist in this world if we become honest? Will we be marginalized by others? No; we will live as before. This is because we do not rely on treachery to eat or breathe. Rather, we live by the breath and life bestowed by God. It is simply that we have accepted God's word the truth and have new rules for how to live, and new life goals, which will lead to changes in the foundation of our lives; it is simply that we are changing the means and method in which we live so that we can satisfy God and seek salvation. This has absolutely nothing to do with what we physically eat, what we wear, or where we live; it is our spiritual need"

(The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The Most Fundamental Practice of Being an Honest Person). Thanks be to God!

14. A Taste of Being an Honest Person

By Yongsui, South Korea

One day in a gathering in late March, a leader talked about a brother that had been arrested and brutally tortured. In a moment of extreme weakness, he'd sold out two other church members. He was filled with regret, and by reading God's words of judgment and revelation, he saw the root of his failure and genuinely repented. The leader asked us what we thought of that experience and if it counted as true testimony. He also asked all of us to share our thoughts. This made me really nervous and I started to speculate: Why did he want us to discuss this? Was it to test whether we saw the problem correctly? I thought, "That brother sold out the others just because of a moment of weakness. That was a transgression. But he did learn about himself and truly repent, so his experience should count as testimony." But, then I thought, unsure, "I'll see what the others have to say first so I don't mess up or say something too vague and make myself look bad." The others started chiming in with their thoughts. To begin with, a sister said something pretty close to what I thought, so I felt validated. But right after that, another sister said that brother had been a Judas, betraying God, so that wasn't a kind of testimony that could bear witness for God. Then a few others said very confidently that his experience didn't count as testimony. Seeing so many people echo that view and back it up made me waver, and I didn't know what to think. Just then, the leader said, "If you think this isn't testimony, raise your hand." Quite a few people put their hands up, but I wasn't sure, so I kept mine down. I was thinking, "I can't raise my hand at the wrong time. Wouldn't that show that I'm lacking in caliber and understanding?" As I was thinking this, the leader asked me, "Why didn't you raise your hand?" I thought to myself, "Oh no, why is he

asking me? Should I have raised my hand?” I shot my hand up into the air. My heart started racing—I started to feel uneasy. Was it right to raise my hand, or not? I did feel in my heart that it could serve as testimony, but I’d raised my hand without really thinking it through. I figured I’d already put my hand in the air, so I started listening to everyone else’s ideas. They were all sharing what they thought, so I started to consider it calmly. That brother had truly repented, so his testimony should stand. I felt that I probably shouldn’t have raised my hand. I did want to share what I really thought at that time, but then I figured that I didn’t have a complete understanding, so it would be fine if I was right. But otherwise, what would the leader think of me? Would he say I didn’t have caliber or any depth in my experience? If the leader saw this in me, he’d think I wasn’t worth training, and I wouldn’t have any future in God’s house. Plus there were lots of brothers and sisters there, so it would be really embarrassing to get it wrong. I went back and forth and wanted to say something plenty of times, but in the end I stayed silent.

After that, the leader fellowshiped that it absolutely did stand as testimony, and that betraying God in a moment of weakness, then experiencing judgment and chastisement, and truly repenting was great testimony. It was motivating for many others and showed God bestows great mercy upon those with true faith. God knows how corrupt we are, so as long as we feel true regret and turn back to Him, He’ll give us the chance to repent, and that kind of testimony glorifies God and shames Satan most of all. The leader went on to explain that our understanding was impure and said we were deceitful and dishonest, that we didn’t base our views on God’s words. Seeing we were supposed to discuss the issue, we guessed there was something wrong with that brother’s experience. We tried to guess what the leader was thinking and didn’t say a single honest word. The

leader patiently fellowshiped with us that we have to think for ourselves and have our own views in everything and that we should tell the truth, whether we're right or not. That's the bottom line for our conduct. Hearing those words "bottom line" made me really uncomfortable. I thought, "He's right. Sharing my true thoughts, even if I'm wrong, is better than following the crowd. At least it would be my own perspective, and I'd be being honest." I hated myself for not saying what I really thought. In just ten short minutes when I should have shared my stance, I'd been deceitful and hadn't practiced the truth, not even meeting the bottom line for human conduct. I not only said the wrong thing and did the wrong thing, but I'd failed to conduct myself properly.

In my devotionals after the gathering, I read this in God's words: **"In their faith in God and the way they conduct themselves, people must take the right path; do not use crooked, evil ways and means. What are crooked, evil ways and means? They are faith in God that is always based on petty cleverness, and smoke and mirrors, and cheap tricks; they are trying to conceal your corruption, and concealing such problems as your shortcomings, faults, and poor caliber. They are always handling things using satanic philosophies, trying to curry favor with God and the church leaders in overt matters, but not practicing the truth, not handling things according to principle, and constantly paying close attention to people in order to toady up to them; they are asking, 'How have I done recently? Do you all support me? Does God know about the good things I've done? And if He does know, will He praise me? What is my place in God's heart? Do I carry any weight with God?' What they are really asking is whether they can be blessed in their belief in God. Are constant ruminations of such things not crooked, evil ways and means? This is not the right path. So, what is**

the right path? The right path is when people pursue the truth in their faith, when they are able to gain the truth, and achieve changes in their disposition” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Six Indicators of Life Growth). This is God reminding and warning us to take the right path in our conduct and as believers. We have to pursue and practice the truth. If we don't put effort into doing these positive things, if we're preoccupied with covering up our flaws, showing off, getting in good with the leaders, having a position in the church, and we're too concerned with what God and the leaders really think of us, this is walking the path of evil. I saw what I was doing was exactly what God revealed. I wasn't sure whether that brother's experience was true testimony or not, but I didn't speak from the heart. Instead I read the room, played my cards, and calculated what others might be thinking. When the leader asked me why I hadn't raised my hand, I thought that had to be the wrong move, and when most people thought that brother's experience didn't stand as testimony, I rushed to follow the crowd. I was being petty, seeing which way the wind blew. I showed nothing but a deceitful satanic disposition. I wondered why it had been so hard to make a single true statement. It was because I was afraid of embarrassing myself by saying the wrong thing, that the leader would think less of me and wouldn't value or train me, and that I might be dismissed from my duty if something like that kept happening. I just wanted to protect my own prestige and keep my position, to conceal my poor caliber and do my best to make a good show. I wanted to act like someone of high caliber who understood the truth and had good insight into things. I always wanted to have the right answer for any question that matched up with the leader's thinking, so he'd think better of me and I'd make a good impression. Then brothers and sisters would approve of me and look up to me, too. I saw the deceit and machinations in my approach. I couldn't be direct even about something so

simple. I could hardly say a single honest, heartfelt word. I was always craftily reading the room to keep my position in God's house. I was taking the path of evil, not the right path. I became aware of all this but didn't do any deeper introspection.

Then three months later, I listened to this fellowship from God. God says: **“Antichrists engage with Christ in the same way they treat people, taking cues from Christ in everything they say and do, listening to His tone, and listening out for the meaning in His words. When they speak, not one word of it is real or sincere; they know only to speak empty words and doctrine. They try to deceive and cheat this person who, in their eyes, is just an ordinary person. They talk as a snake slithers, the course sinuous and indirect. The manner and direction of their words is like a melon vine climbing its way up a pole. When You say someone is of good caliber and could be promoted, they immediately talk about how good they are, and what is manifested and revealed in them; and if You say someone is bad, they are quick to talk about how bad and evil they are, about how they cause disturbances and interruptions in the church. When You wish to learn the truth about something, they have nothing to say; they prevaricate, waiting for You to make a decision, listening out for the meaning in Your words, trying to figure out Your intentions. Everything they say is flattery, brownnosing, and obsequiousness; not a word of truth comes out of their mouths”** (The

Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. For Leaders and Workers, Choosing a Path Is of Utmost Importance (20)). These words from God cut me to the quick. All those times I'd been dishonest and had tailored my actions to what others wanted came to mind. Though I didn't have direct contact with Christ, I wouldn't accept God's scrutiny in the environment He'd set up. I just wanted to show off and get the leader to like me, so I measured my words

and said what he wanted to hear without being remotely honest. It was all smoke and mirrors. The way I spoke and acted was just like a snake, and it was disgusting to God. I thought playing it by ear that way could fool the leader, and I figured I'd give him a good impression by looking good when I answered the question, then I'd secure my position and future in God's house. That was incredibly foolish of me, and in fact I was trying to fool God. I didn't actually believe that God scrutinizes everything. My caliber, stature, and thoughts, and my attitude and perspectives in every situation—He sees all those things with absolute clarity. Even if I could hoodwink the people around me, I could never hoodwink God. In fact, God doesn't look at what I say or do in front of others, but how I approach the truth. He looks at what I practice and live out every day, and how I behave in my duty. God especially scrutinizes every tiny thing like this. He looks at whether I love and practice the truth, and that false front of mine couldn't fool Him at all. Then I finally realized that I wasn't just being devious, but I was denying God's righteousness and the fact that He observes all things. I was acting like a nonbeliever. Before, when I heard God's analysis of antichrists scorning Christ and fawning over Him, I didn't think it had much to do with me. I'd never personally encountered Christ, so I thought I wouldn't show that kind of satanic disposition. Then I finally realized I was wrong, that you don't have to come into contact with Christ to reveal that satanic disposition. I tried to curry favor and score points with the leader, and I was willing to do things like that to keep my position in God's house. I was showing exactly that satanic disposition. If I ever did come face-to-face with Christ, that would surely become even more pronounced. I wouldn't be able to stop myself from trying to fool and oppose God.

For a few days, I kept thinking about how even though we'd given the wrong answer, the leader hadn't pruned and dealt with us as I'd thought,

and he didn't say that our caliber was lacking, dismiss us, or refuse to train us. He just asked us to share our thoughts so he'd understand our shortcomings before fellowshiping on the truth and giving us guidance on the principles. He also exposed our corrupt dispositions and told us to reflect on ourselves. Everything he did was to help and support us. There's no need to speculate in God's house, and with brothers and sisters. That made me think of God's words: **"In essence, God is faithful, and so His words can always be trusted; His actions, furthermore, are faultless and unquestionable, which is why God likes those who are absolutely honest with Him"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Three Admonitions). God's words and deeds are most deserving of our trust, and He treats us with sincerity. When God created man, He told them which fruit they could and couldn't eat in the garden. He spoke simply and directly—no guesswork was needed. In the Age of Grace, the Lord Jesus said **"Truly, truly, I say to you"** all the time. And in this stage of God's work, we can feel how honest and real Almighty God's words are. For the most part, they're deeply heartfelt words that are warm and kind, and even though the parts exposing our corrupt dispositions seem harsh, they're all based in reality, and they're all to purify and save us. God is sincere and transparent with us. There's no pretense whatsoever. But I was calculating and scheming in that situation without a shred of honesty. I felt that I really was way too deceitful and despicable.

Then I remembered some words from God. **"I take pleasure in those who are not suspicious of others, and I like those who readily accept the truth; toward these two kinds of people I show great care, for in My eyes they are honest people. If you are deceitful, then you will be guarded and suspicious toward all people and matters, and thus your faith in Me will be built upon a foundation of suspicion. I could never**

acknowledge such faith” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. How to Know the God on Earth). I never understood before why God said that someone who isn’t suspicious of others and readily accepts the truth is honest in God’s eyes. But now, pondering His words, I began to understand. Honest people don’t harbor suspicions toward God or man; they’re innocent. They don’t try to figure things out with their human brain, but instead they come before God to seek the truth. They accept and practice what they can understand and they do what God says. They approach the truth with an honest heart, and that kind of heart is so precious. This is what it means to be childlike. God blesses them; the Holy Spirit works in them, and guides and enlightens them. They then understand and gain the truth more easily. But, even if someone can say some true things and perform their duty a bit, if they’re like a maze inside, always suspicious and on their guard, and even suspicious about lovely, kind God, then they’re the most deceitful, dishonest type of person. At that point I began to understand why God says deceitful people can’t be saved. Part of it is that God is so genuine, He hates deceitful people and does not save them. Another part has to do with our subjective pursuit. Deceitful people are too complicated. They’re always guessing, analyzing, and guarding against people, things, and God. They also really know how to read people. Their thoughts are overtaken with these things and they don’t seek the truth at all. The Holy Spirit can’t do any work in them. That’s why they’ll never understand the truth. Just as God says, **“God does not perfect those who are deceitful. If your heart is not honest—if you are not an honest person—then you will never be gained by God. Likewise, you will never gain the truth, and will also be incapable of gaining God”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Six Indicators of Life Growth). So at that point I took another hard look at myself. Faced with an issue, I didn’t come before God to seek the truth with an

honest heart, but instead was obsessed with gauging others' tones. I was like that a lot even in normal discussions with brothers and sisters. Sometimes I didn't completely understand something, but I'd just go along with whatever understanding most of the others had. Sometimes I had my own opinion, but I was afraid of saying the wrong thing, so I'd hold back and listen to everyone else first and only speak up if I knew I was right. Otherwise, I figured I didn't need to say anything so I wouldn't lose face. I saw how deceitful and indirect I was. I just followed the herd when I didn't understand something and watched and went along with what the others did. That kept me from really understanding the truth. But there's nothing scary about lacking caliber or not knowing the truth. What's scary is when people are always covering for what they don't understand. Then they'll never be able to understand the truth. I felt it was dangerous to go on that way and that being honest is critical.

I started to seek how to be honest when I faced things in the future, and what principles I should stick to. I read a couple of passages of God's words. Almighty God says: **"To be openhearted with God, you must first put aside your personal desires. Instead of focusing on how God treats you, say what is in your heart, and do not ponder or consider what the consequences of your words will be; say whatever you are thinking, put aside your motivations, and do not try and use words to achieve some objective. 'I should say this, not that, I must be careful about what I say, I have to achieve my objective'—are there personal motivations involved here? In their minds, these people have gone round in circles before the words have even been spoken, they have processed what they were going to say many times, and filtered it many times in their head. Upon coming out of their mouths, these words carry the deceitful schemes of Satan; this is not an openhearted way of acting toward**

God” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. For Leaders and Workers, Choosing a Path Is of Utmost Importance (20)). **“In all matters, you should be open to God and you should be openhearted—this is the only condition and state that should be maintained before God. Even when you are not open, you are open before God. God knows, whether you are open or not. Are you not foolish if you cannot see that? So how can you be wise? You know that God scrutinizes and knows everything, so do not think He might not know; since it is certain that God secretly sees people’s minds, people would be wise to be a little more openhearted, a little more pure, and be honest—that is the smart thing to do. ... When people start paying attention to form, when it gets put through their brain, when they give it some thought, this becomes a troublesome matter. In their minds they always think, ‘What can I say to make God think highly of me, and not know what I am thinking inside? What is the right thing to say? I must keep more to myself, I must be a little more tactful, I must have a method; maybe then God will think highly of me.’ Do you think God will not know if you are always thinking like that? God knows whatever you think. It is exhausting to think like that. It is so much simpler to speak honestly and truly, and it makes your life easier. God will say that you are honest and pure, that you are openhearted—and that is infinitely precious. If you have an open heart and an honest attitude, then even if there are times when you go too far, and act foolishly, to God this is not a transgression; it is better than your petty tricks, and better than your constant pondering and processing”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. For Leaders and Workers, Choosing a Path Is of Utmost Importance (9)). It says in God’s words that what’s most important and most fundamental in how we approach God and the situations He sets up is being openhearted. We have to lay our hearts

bare to God without concealment or camouflage, without trying to study or process things. We shouldn't harbor motives behind our words or employ any tactics, but just share our thoughts with a spirit of truthfulness. We need to acknowledge we don't understand things that we can't fathom, and then come before God to seek the truth with an innocent, honest heart. That's being wise. God sees all and knows us like the back of His hand. My caliber, how much truth I understand, the depth of my experience, and whether I understand something are things God knows well. I'm laid bare before God. What need is there to cover up my faults and pretend to understand everything? Actually, always being calculating, observing others and guessing at what they thought and wracking my brains over what to say was exhausting both mentally and emotionally, and God hated it. That was when I finally saw how important it is to be innocent and candid from the heart. God treasures that, and it's also a freer and more relaxing way to live. I also saw that God doesn't just look at people's caliber or at whether their opinions are right. He looks at our hearts, our attitude toward the truth, and what dispositions we express along the way. Even if we're wrong sometimes, if we're open and honest, God won't care if we're foolish or lacking in caliber, and He won't condemn us for it. On the contrary, always being deceitful is what God finds disgusting and hateful. At that point I resolved that I would practice the truth and be an honest person. By being open to God in the environment He creates, being candid in dealings with others, speaking from the heart and opening up about what I understand, I can slowly resolve my hypocritical, deceitful corrupt disposition.

I remember one time when we approached the leader about a church hymn that had a couple of lines that seemed hollow to us. He didn't say anything about those lines, but he said the hymn didn't have value, that it was no good. The word "Yeah" just fell out of my mouth. I realized right

away I was being deceitful again. I hadn't seen the problems he saw in it. I was being a yes-man, pretending I understood. I hated how a lie popped out the moment I opened my mouth and I didn't want to bluff my way through this. If I didn't understand it, then I didn't understand it. I thought of God's words: **"To be honest is to be pure in your actions and words"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Three Admonitions). I knew I had to amend the lie I'd just told, and be honest. So I told the leader, "I thought there was a problem with two of the lines. I didn't realize this hymn doesn't have value." He patiently fellowshiped with us on the problems in the hymn and this opened my eyes a bit about the song. I felt a sense of peace. The truth is, there's no need to package our words, actions, or views, but we can just be honest people who are practical and realistic. I also started practicing honesty when brothers and sisters on my team were discussing issues. Whether I was right or wrong, I just shared my real opinion. I was frank about anything I didn't understand, and if I was wrong, I corrected my errors. That brought me a lot of peace. I'm not anywhere near the standard of a true honest person yet, but I've really felt the importance of being honest and I know that's the only way to be saved by God. I really aspire to become an honest person and I want to keep striving for that, to pursue that. Thanks be to God!

15. After the Lies

By Chen Shi, China

Almighty God says, **“You ought to know that God likes those who are honest. In essence, God is faithful, and so His words can always be trusted; His actions, furthermore, are faultless and unquestionable, which is why God likes those who are absolutely honest with Him. Honesty means giving your heart to God, being genuine with God in all things, being open with Him in all things, never hiding the facts, not trying to deceive those above and below you, and not doing things only to curry favor with God. In short, to be honest is to be pure in your actions and words, and to deceive neither God nor man”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Three Admonitions). The Lord Jesus also said, **“Truly I say to you, Except you be converted, and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven”** (Matthew 18:3). We can see from God’s words that He is faithful, that He likes the honest and despises the deceitful, and that only honest people can be saved and enter the heavenly kingdom. That’s why God demands over and over that we be honest, and that we resolve our lying and deceitful motives. But in real life, whenever something touched upon my reputation and status, I couldn’t help but lie and be deceptive. Without the judgment and revelation of God’s words, without His chastening and discipline, I’d never have truly repented, turned away from lies, and practiced the truth as an honest person.

A couple of years ago, I was performing the duty of a church leader. One day my leader asked me to attend a co-workers’ gathering. I was so happy. I thought about how hard I’d worked in the church recently, holding gatherings and fellowshiping every day, and most brothers and sisters were actively engaged in their duty. Some groups had made a lot of progress, so I

thought for sure this gathering would be a chance for me to be seen. I could show the leader and co-workers how capable I was, that I was better than the others. When I arrived, I saw Sister Liu was frowning worriedly, and she said with a sigh, “How’s your work of watering and supporting brothers and sisters going? We’re having a hard time. I must be lacking the reality of the truth. There are a lot of issues I just can’t resolve.” I smiled and said, “The watering work is going pretty well in our church, a lot better than before.” The leader came in just then and started asking about the watering work in the churches. I thought it was my chance to shine, so I had to make a good show. Surprisingly, she didn’t ask us about our successes in watering work, but asked about what difficulties had come up, how they had been resolved through fellowship on the truth, and which difficulties hadn’t been resolved. I panicked. Generally, I just organized the work and didn’t know the details at all, so I hadn’t done any real watering. I didn’t know what to do. What should I say when the leader asked me? If I told the truth, would she think that I wasn’t doing practical work? I’d just been bragging to Sister Liu, saying the work I was responsible for had been going well. If I couldn’t talk about the details, would she say I had been bragging over nothing? What could I do? I felt more and more worried. Just then, Brother Zhou talked about some issues they’d encountered in the watering work in their church and the corruptions he’d revealed in his work. Then he explained how he’d sought the truth to resolve these things. He explained it in a very practical, detailed way, that showed us a path of practice. I felt a real sense of shame after hearing his fellowship. Knowing I hadn’t done any practical work, I lowered my head and my face burned. The leader then asked me to speak. My heart skipped a beat. What should I say? I had no details to share, and just an overview would show I wasn’t doing practical work. What would people think of me if I told the truth? I felt I couldn’t be

forthright. So I just said, “My situation is pretty much the same as Brother Zhou’s. There’s no need to repeat it.” The leader listened and said nothing, then started the gathering by reading God’s words. In that gathering, I felt as if I’d stolen something from someone. I was really on edge, afraid of the day my leader would check on or supervise my work, find out that my practice wasn’t like Brother Zhou’s, and remove me from my duty for not doing practical work, for lying and deceiving. My anxiety grew but I still lacked the courage to tell the truth. I quietly resolved, “I absolutely have to work the way Brother Zhou does to make up for my dishonesty today.”

When I got back to the church, I met with the deacons and group leaders right away, gave a detailed, in-person fellowship, and had them start immediately. Then I rode my bike to Sister Lyu’s house. I told her about Brother Zhou’s path in detail, and told her to share it with the other brothers and sisters on watering duty. Three days flew by just like that and I very happily waited to harvest the fruit of my labors. To my surprise, they told me they’d encountered a lot of problems in their watering work, some of which they couldn’t resolve, and that newcomers had been taken in by the lies of the Chinese Communist Party and religious pastors because they hadn’t been watered in time, and so they didn’t dare come to gatherings anymore. My mind was reeling. How could that have happened? I rushed back to Sister Lyu’s house and as soon as she saw me, she said anxiously, “Now what should we do about these problems with our watering work? I really don’t know.” I just didn’t know what to say. I had especially instructed her through fellowship and had gone into great detail in my fellowship, but she still didn’t understand. I wondered what was wrong with those people. I’d fellowshipped so clearly but they still didn’t get it. What would the leader think of me if my work wasn’t done well? The more I thought about it, the more frustrated and depressed I felt. I tossed and

turned in bed that night, unable to sleep, feeling totally devoid of energy. I finally came before God in prayer: “God, I’ve worked so much harder in my duty these last few days, but I’ve accomplished nothing. I can’t feel Your guidance, and I’m living in darkness. God, am I doing something contrary to Your will, arousing Your disgust and hatred? Please enlighten me so that I may understand my own state.”

I then read these revealing words from God: **“Are your goals and intentions made with Me in mind? Are all your words and actions said and done in My presence? I examine all of your thoughts and ideas. Do you not feel guilty? You put on a false front for others to see and you calmly assume an air of self-righteousness; you do this to shield yourself. You do this to conceal your evil, and you even think up ways to push that evil onto someone else. What treachery dwells in your heart!”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 13). **“Do not act one way to others’ faces but another way behind their backs; I see clearly everything you do, and though you may fool others, you cannot fool Me. I see it all clearly. It is not possible for you to conceal anything; all lies within My hands. Do not think yourself so very clever for making your petty little calculations come out to your advantage. I tell you: However many plans man may hatch, be they thousands or tens of thousands, in the end they cannot escape from the palm of My hand. All things and all objects are controlled by My hands, never mind a single person! Do not try to evade Me or hide, do not try to wheedle or conceal. Can it be that you still do not see that My glorious countenance, My wrath and My judgment, have been publicly revealed? Whosoever does not want Me sincerely, I will judge them immediately and without mercy. My pity has come to its end; there is no more left. Do not be hypocrites any longer, and put a stop to**

your wild and reckless ways” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 44). I reflected on myself after reading this. I had been rushing around holding gatherings and fellowshiping with deacons and group leaders, but what was it all for? Was I really doing it for the sake of the church work, for the lives of my brothers and sisters? Was I doing it to resolve their practical problems? Then I thought of how I’d lied in that gathering. When the leader asked about the watering work, I knew well I hadn’t done any practical work, but I was deceptive so I wouldn’t look like a fool, so people wouldn’t see through me or look down on me. I had rushed back to patch the holes in my work just so the leader wouldn’t find out I had lied. I realized then that I had worked so hard just to keep my lie going, to cover up the truth that I hadn’t done practical work, and for my own reputation and status. I had just used the path Brother Zhou had fellowshiped about instead of truly understanding brothers’ and sisters’ actual difficulties and resolving their issues by fellowshiping on the truth. I had been careless in my duty, harboring that despicable motive. How could that be in line with God’s will? God sees into our innermost hearts, so how could He not be disgusted by me trying to deceive Him, cheat Him, and fool Him that way? The darkness I had fallen into was God chastening and disciplining me. Realizing this left me feeling a bit afraid and I thought about practicing the truth and being open in the next gathering. But I felt some concern, thinking about how I’d told such a big lie. What would the others think of me if I admitted it? Would they say I was cunning?

I then read another passage of God’s words. **“When you tell a lie, you do not lose face there and then, but in your heart you feel that you have been utterly discredited, and your conscience will accuse you of being dishonest. Deep down, you will despise yourself and hold yourself in contempt, and will think, ‘How come I live so pitifully? Is it really so**

hard to speak the truth? Must I tell these lies just for the sake of my reputation? Why is life so wearisome for me?’ You do not have to live a wearisome life, but you have not chosen a path of ease and freedom. You have chosen a path of upholding your reputation and your vanity, so for you, life is very tiresome. What is the reputation you gain from telling lies? Reputation is an empty thing, and is simply not worth a dime. By telling lies, you sell out your integrity and your dignity. These lies cause you to lose your dignity and to have no integrity before God. God takes no delight in this and He detests it. So is it worth it? Is this path correct? No, it is not, and by following it you are not living in the light. When you are not living in the light, you feel exhausted. You are always telling lies and trying to make the lies sound plausible, racking your brains to think of nonsense to say, causing yourself much suffering, until finally you think, ‘I must not tell lies anymore. I’ll keep quiet and talk little.’ But you just cannot help yourself. Why is this? You cannot relinquish things such as your reputation and prestige, so you can only uphold them with lies. You feel that you can use lies to hold onto these things, but actually, you cannot. Not only have your untruths not succeeded in maintaining your integrity and dignity, but, more importantly, you have lost a chance to practice the truth. Even if you have upheld your reputation and prestige, you have lost the truth; you have lost an opportunity to put it into practice, as well as a chance to be an honest person. This is the greatest of losses” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only by Being Honest Can One Live Out a True Human Likeness). Every one of God’s words went straight to my heart. I maintained my reputation after telling my lie, but I couldn’t feel a shred of happiness. Instead, I was uneasy, constantly feeling bad about what I’d done. Sometimes I didn’t want to meet people’s eyes when I spoke, afraid they’d

see my deception and wouldn't trust me anymore. I even tried all sorts of things to cover up my lie, to make it believable. It was a difficult, exhausting way to live, and I couldn't find any relief. I had lied and been deceitful, and I lived in a despicable, undignified way. Not wanting to cover up for myself anymore, I prayed to God to confess and repent and resolved I'd forsake my flesh and open up next time I saw the brothers and sisters.

The leader came to attend a gathering with us a few days later and I felt it was God giving me a chance to practice the truth. I prayed, "Oh God, I'm willing to reveal my lie and my deceit. Please give me the resolve to practice the truth." When I arrived, I learned that she had come to choose a work companion from among us church leaders. An internal struggle rose up within me: Out of us church leaders, my caliber and accomplishments were somewhat better than the others' so maybe they already saw me as a suitable candidate. But if I told the truth and revealed my lie, would they think less of me? Would they think I was too cunning, and not pick me? How could I ever show my face again if someone else was picked? I figured I couldn't talk about it. Just as I had my head down, lost in thought, the leader asked me to share how I'd been recently. Stumbling over my words, I glossed over it. "I've been in a good state. When facing difficulties, I know to pray to God and seek the truth to resolve them." After saying this, I felt I had done a shameful thing and I was filled with anxiety. I broke out in a sweat. Seeing that I kept wiping sweat away, the leader got me a cup of hot water and kindly asked if I had a cold. I said, "I don't know why, I just feel anxious and can't stop sweating." In fact, I knew very well that it was because I'd lied again and had not practiced the truth. I made a silent prayer to God: "God, I've lied time and again, stubbornly refusing to practice the truth. I'm so rigid, so rebellious. Please guide me so I may practice the truth and be an honest person."

Sister Liu then suggested that we sing a hymn of God's words. **"Honesty means giving your heart to God, being genuine with God in all things, being open with Him in all things, never hiding the facts, not trying to deceive those above and below you, and not doing things only to curry favor with God. In short, to be honest is to be pure in your actions and words, and to deceive neither God nor man. If your words are riddled with excuses and valueless justifications, then I say that you are someone who is loath to put the truth into practice. If you have many confidences that you are reluctant to share, if you are highly averse to laying bare your secrets—your difficulties—before others to seek the way of the light, then I say that you are someone who will not attain salvation easily, and who will not easily emerge from the darkness. If seeking the way of the truth pleases you well, then you are someone who dwells always in the light"** (Follow the Lamb and Sing New Songs, God Blesses Those Who Are Honest). While I sang this hymn, I felt both distressed and ashamed. I had prayed before the gathering because I wanted to open up about how I had lied and been deceitful, but when I found out the leader was selecting someone to work with her, I didn't want to divulge anything. I was afraid of the leader and co-workers knowing I hadn't done practical work and had even lied, that they would say I was too cunning and wouldn't choose me for the position. Then I'd lose my chance at being a leader. I was being so deceitful! God sees everything. I may be able to fool others but cannot deceive God. These words really stood out: **"If you have many confidences that you are reluctant to share, if you are highly averse to laying bare your secrets—your difficulties—before others to seek the way of the light, then I say that you are someone who will not attain salvation easily, and who will not easily emerge from the darkness."** I felt even more uncomfortable. Wasn't I someone with many

confidences she was reluctant to share, just as God said? I had known perfectly well that I didn't know the specifics of watering work, but when the leader asked me about it, I'd played games, and had knowingly lied, and when I got back to the church I didn't open up to the others to reveal my corruption and the faults in my work. Instead I'd tried to cover up for my lies and keep them going whilst appearing to do my duty. How was that doing my duty? It was all to protect my name and status. I was trying to fool God, and misleading people. And once again, in order to win this new position, I brazenly went back on my vow, cheating both God and man. I was lying and being deceitful time after time after time! These words from God then occurred to me: **“But let your communication be, Yes, yes; No, no: for whatever is more than these comes of evil”** (Matthew 5:37). **“You are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father you will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and stayed not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it”** (John 8:44). I knew full well that God likes honest people, but I had lied and covered up my lies over and over, trying to deceive God and my brothers and sisters. How was I any different from Satan? Did I have even a shred of normal humanity? If I didn't repent and change, I knew I'd be bound for the same end as Satan. This thought frightened me, so I prayed to God and I mustered up the courage to tear my own reputation to shreds. I revealed the lying and whitewashing I'd been doing and my despicable, crafty motives in great detail, leaving nothing out. After I'd totally come clean I felt like a great weight had been lifted and I suddenly felt much more relaxed. I felt free and at ease in my heart.

The brothers and sisters didn't scorn me and the leader even read a passage of God's words to me. **“When people engage in deceit, what intentions stem from this? What sort of disposition do they reveal?**

Why are they able to express this kind of disposition? What is the root of it? It is that people see their own self-interests as being more important than everything else. They engage in deceit in order to benefit themselves, and their deceitful dispositions are thereby revealed. How should this problem be resolved? First, you must relinquish your own interests. Getting people to relinquish their own interests is the hardest thing to do. Most people seek nothing but profit; people's interests are their life, and making them relinquish those things is tantamount to forcing them to give up their lives. So, what should you do? You must learn to relinquish, to forsake, to suffer, and to endure the pain of letting go of the interests you love. Once you have endured this pain and relinquished a few of your interests, you will feel a little relieved and a bit liberated, and in this way, you will overcome your flesh. However, if you cling to your interests and fail to let go of them, saying, 'I've been deceitful, but so what? God has not punished me, so what can people do to me? I won't relinquish anything!' When you do not relinquish anything, no one else suffers any losses; it is you yourself who ultimately loses out. When you recognize your own corrupt disposition, this is, in fact, an opportunity for you to enter, to progress, and to change; it is a chance for you to come before God and accept His scrutiny and His judgment and chastisement. This is, moreover, an opportunity for you to attain salvation. If you give up on seeking the truth, then that is tantamount to giving up an opportunity to attain salvation and to accept judgment and chastisement. If you want profit, not the truth, and profit is what you have chosen, then, in the end, profit is what you will gain, though you will have abandoned the truth. Tell Me: Is this a loss or a gain? Profit is not eternal. Status, self-respect, money, any material thing—they are all transient. When

you have quashed this element of your corrupt disposition, gained this aspect of the truth, and attained salvation, you will be one who is precious before God. Moreover, the truths people gain are eternal; Satan cannot take these truths away from them, nor can anyone else. You have relinquished your interests but what you have gained are the truth and salvation; these results belong to you. You gained them for yourself. If people choose to practice the truth, then even if they have lost their self-interests, they are gaining God's salvation and eternal life. Those people are the smartest ones. If people benefit at the expense of the truth, then what they lose are life and God's salvation; those people are the stupidest. As for what a person ultimately will choose—self-interests or the truth—this is a matter that reveals a person more than any other. Those who love the truth will choose the truth; they will choose to submit before God, and follow Him. They would rather abandon their own interests. No matter how much they have to suffer, they are determined to stand testimony to satisfy God. This is the fundamental route of practicing the truth and entering the truth reality” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Knowing One's Disposition Is the Foundation of Changing It). Hearing these words brightened my heart. I reflected on how I'd lied and cheated time after time mainly because I cared too much about reputation and position, and because I had a deceitful nature. I'd been educated and indoctrinated by Satan since I was little and had absorbed so many of its poisons like “Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost,” “As a tree lives for its bark, a man lives for his face,” “A lie will become the truth if it is repeated ten thousand times,” “No great feats can be accomplished without the telling of lies,” “Think before you speak and then talk with reservation,” and so on. Those satanic philosophies had become my laws for survival. I'd lived by them,

becoming more selfish, deceitful, and fake. I only ever thought of my own interests and couldn't help but lie and deceive to that end. Though I felt guilty and reproached myself after lying and I wanted to repent to God and open up to the others, my fear of being shamed and laughed at kept me covering for myself and putting on a false front. I wasn't willing to open up and reveal my own cunning motives and deceptive behavior. I particularly lacked the courage to set my face aside and be honest, thinking that the moment I told the truth, people would see me for what I was, and they would no longer think highly of me. I preferred struggling in darkness and pain over practicing the truth and being honest. I saw how deeply corrupted by Satan I was! Without God exposing me that way, without the judgment and revelation of His words, I'd never have seen how cunning my nature was, and I wouldn't have been motivated to practice the truth and reveal my true self. I perceived then that God's judgment and chastisement were Him protecting and saving me, and I felt how important pursuing the truth and practicing being honest are.

From then on, I set my mind to practicing telling the truth and being an honest person. After a while, I found that a leader who joined us in gatherings could sometimes be arrogant and self-righteous and wouldn't easily accept others' suggestions. I wanted to mention it to her a few times, but then I thought, "It's all well and good if she accepts what I say, but if not, what will she think of me?" I decided to wait and see. One day she asked me, "Sister, we've known each other for a while now. If you see any problems in me, please let me know. That would be helpful for me." I looked at her and was about to say, "I haven't noticed anything. You're great." But I realized that would be deceptive, so I prayed to God and made myself willing to accept His scrutiny. I couldn't keep lying and deceiving, inciting God's disgust. So, I opened up and told her about her problem. She

listened, then quickly nodded and said, “Thanks be to God! I never would have realized this if you hadn’t told me. I really need to reflect on myself and understand this.” I was so happy when I saw she was able to accept it. I felt an incredible sense of peace and release and really experienced how wonderful it is to practice the truth and be an honest person!

16. Behind the Silence

By Li zhi, Greece

I'm not much of a talker, and it's not often that I open up and speak from the heart. I always thought it was because I had an introverted personality type, but then after I went through some things and saw what was revealed in God's words, I realized that always keeping to myself and never casually sharing my opinions wasn't being an introvert, and it wasn't acting with reason. Hidden within that was the satanic disposition of craftiness.

Some time ago, I started performing editing duty. I saw that the brothers and sisters I worked with on editing duty were pretty experienced; they understood the principles and were of pretty good caliber. Everyone had some discernment over who understood the truth, and who possessed true talent and solid learning. This rattled me a bit. I was of average caliber and didn't have the reality of the truth, so if I just casually expressed my opinions in our discussions, wouldn't that be like trying to teach fish to swim? It wouldn't matter if I turned out to be right, but otherwise, everyone would think I was parading myself in spite of my shallow understanding of the truth. I felt like that would be really embarrassing. I was constantly warning myself to keep a low profile, to listen more than I spoke. And so, when we were all exploring issues together, I hardly ever shared what I thought. There was one time when I did make a suggestion, and everyone agreed it wasn't the right approach—I felt so humiliated, and like I shouldn't just rashly put myself out there, or I'd be likely to stick my foot in my mouth, making a fool of myself. I felt like I needed to proceed with caution and keep to myself. In discussions after that, I made sure not to volunteer what I thought, letting other people have their say first.

A sister later joined our team who had pretty good caliber and was really insightful, and she was assigned to work with me. Once when we were talking over an issue, I had some ideas that I wanted to share, but then I worried that if my thinking was off and what I said couldn't hold up to scrutiny, this new sister might think I was simple and naive, and I'd be exposed for what I really was. Then what would I do if she started looking down on me? I decided to forget about it, and to just hear what she had to say. As we worked on this problem over the next couple of days, I hardly shared any of my own perspective, but just opted to go along with hers, figuring it would save me some potential embarrassment and make things easier. Since I didn't do much talking, our collaborative environment felt pretty dull. Sometimes when she encountered a problem and I wouldn't share my opinion, we'd just get stuck on it. Our productivity was really low and our general work progress was being held up. As time went on, I spoke up less and less, and even if I did have an opinion, I'd just turn it over in my mind over and over, thinking long and hard before opening my mouth. I was feeling really depressed and I wasn't achieving much of anything in my duty; I was just stuck in that state, feeling oddly gloomy and troubled. It was at this time that I came before God to pray, saying, "God, I can't feel any of the Holy Spirit's enlightenment in my duty these days and I'm hardly making any progress in work. I don't know which corrupt dispositions I'm living within that disgust You—please guide me to know myself." One day when I was doing some self-reflection in my devotionals, the word "slippery" suddenly popped into my head. I found this in my search for relevant words from God: **"Someone might never open up and communicate what they think with others. And in all that they do, they never consult with others, but instead are closed off, seemingly on their guard against others at every turn. They enshroud themselves as tightly**

as can be. Is this not a cunning person? For example, they have an idea that they feel is ingenious, and think, ‘I’ll keep it to myself for now. If I share it, you could use it and steal my thunder. I’ll hold back.’ Or if there’s something they don’t fully understand, they will think: ‘I won’t speak up now. What if I do, and someone says something more elevated, won’t I look like a fool? Everyone will see right through me, see my weakness in this. I shouldn’t say anything.’ So regardless of the perspective or reasoning, regardless of the underlying motive, they’re afraid everyone will see right through them. They always approach their own duty and people, things and events with this kind of perspective and attitude. What kind of disposition is this? A crooked, deceitful and evil disposition” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only by Practicing the Truth Can One Possess Normal Humanity). Reading this left me with a heavy heart. God’s words perfectly exposed my true state and the words “a crooked, deceitful and evil disposition” were really poignant and discomfiting for me. I thought about how, by not speaking up directly or casually expressing my opinion, even though it felt like I was being very sensible, in fact, I was full of machinations. I had my own perspectives and opinions on issues we faced, but when I didn’t feel completely on top of things, I was afraid of having what I said rejected, of losing face and being looked down on by others. So, I held myself back, first getting a sense of what others thought and then taking things from there. Wasn’t that being slippery and crafty? I had always thought that only applied to those people in society who were constantly scheming, who were treacherous and cunning. All of my friends and colleagues out in the world agreed that I was a guileless person, that I wasn’t harboring any ulterior motives in my actions. I had always really hated people who were slippery as an eel, who were constantly trying to see which way the wind blew. I’d never thought of

myself as anything like that. But then I saw that even though I didn't tell any outright lies and I didn't do things exactly like those people, I was still being driven by my crafty nature. I was careful to read the room in everything I said and did, and I'd just go along with the flow, afraid of looking incompetent and having people see right through me. I was insincere at every turn, disguising myself to protect my reputation. In the face of any difficulties in my duty, I never just casually shared what I thought, but I was crafty and deceptive, concealing my opinions and hardly giving any thought to the interests of God's house. I finally realized that I actually was a slippery, crafty person. I'd always thought that not being a big talker was just a part of my personality—I hadn't really analyzed the satanic disposition that was behind it. Only then did I see how poorly I knew myself.

There was another passage of God's words I read that really helped clarify things for me. God says: **"Satan corrupts people through the education and influence of national governments and of the famous and great. Their devilish words have become man's life nature. 'Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost' is a well-known satanic saying that has been instilled into everyone, and that has become man's life. There are other words of philosophies for living that are also like this. Satan uses each nation's fine traditional culture to educate people, causing mankind to fall into and be engulfed by a boundless abyss of destruction, and in the end people are destroyed by God because they serve Satan and resist God. ... There are still many satanic poisons in people's lives, in their conduct and behavior; they possess almost no truth at all. For example, their philosophies for living, their ways of doing things, and their maxims are all filled with the poisons of the great red dragon, and they all come from Satan. Thus, all things that**

flow through people's bones and blood are all things of Satan. ... Mankind has been profoundly corrupted by Satan. Satan's venom flows through the blood of every person, and it can be seen that man's nature is corrupt, evil, and reactionary, filled by and immersed in the philosophies of Satan—it is, in its entirety, a nature that betrays God. This is why people resist God and stand in opposition to God” (The Word,

Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. How to Know Man's Nature). God's words spoke precisely to the deepest recesses of my heart. I saw I'd been upholding satanic philosophies all along: “Open your ears and shut your mouth” and “Silence is gold, and he who talks a lot errs a lot.” By being a “receiver” instead of a “megaphone” with others, I wouldn't have to put my weaknesses on display or look foolish. By bottling up what I wanted to say, many of my mistaken ideas never came to light, so of course no one could point out my faults or disagree with me. That way I could save face, and that further convinced me that following the ideas of “Silence is gold” and “Open your ears and shut your mouth” was the wisest way to get by in this world. After accepting Almighty God's work of the last days, I still couldn't help but continue to let these things dictate my interactions with brothers and sisters. I felt that as long as I didn't say much or kept my mouth shut, no one would find out about my personal failings and shortcomings, and I could protect my image. I lived by these satanic philosophies, and whenever I did want to share my own perspective, I was always calculating my own loss or gain and what other people would think. If I thought there was a chance I'd embarrass myself, I'd choose to go the safe route, not saying or doing anything. These satanic poisons made me more and more slippery and cunning, and made me second-guess and guard against others more all the time. I wouldn't take the initiative to communicate and open up, and my

work with others was really depressing and monotonous. There was no way I could do a decent job in my duty that way.

Recognizing this, I came before God in prayer, asking Him to guide me to resolve this aspect of my corrupt disposition. After that, I made a conscious effort in discussions with brothers and sisters to turn away from my own personal motives and start volunteering my own thoughts without worrying about how it would make me look. With ideas that weren't very well-developed, I'd present them to brothers and sisters for debate and dialogue; when we ran into difficulties in our duty, everyone would pray and seek together, all communicating with each other. We could find a way forward this way. But since I was so deeply corrupted by Satan, there were still plenty of times I couldn't help but act according to my corrupt disposition. One time in a discussion regarding an issue in our duty, a couple of supervisors happened to be there. I thought to myself, "Tossing ideas around with brothers and sisters is all well and good, but with the supervisors here, what will they think of my caliber if my thinking is wrong, if my understanding is off? What if they think I'm not a good fit for this duty and they pull me off the team—what would the others think of me? I'd never be able to hold my head up again." Racked with these worries, I didn't say a single word in the entire discussion. As we were wrapping things up, one of the supervisors asked me why I hadn't said anything at all. I felt really awkward and guilty, too, and I didn't know what to say in response. Finally, I said, "That was another display of my crafty disposition. I was afraid that if I said too much, I'd be bound to slip up, so I didn't dare open my mouth." But after the fact, I still felt uneasy. Even though I'd acknowledged the corruption I was showing, would I still do the same thing next time I found myself in that kind of situation? Reflecting on this, I saw that even though I had some self-knowledge and I'd held myself

up against God's words exposing this problem, I still couldn't help but live according to this corrupt disposition in the face of a challenge. I hadn't truly repented and changed. I came before God to pray, asking Him to guide me to truly know myself.

I later read this passage of God's words: **"Antichrists believe that if they are always fond of talking and of opening their hearts to others, everyone will see through them and see they have no depth, but are just ordinary people, and will then no longer respect them. What does it mean when others do not respect them? It means that they no longer have a lofty place in others' hearts, and that they seem quite commonplace, quite simple, quite ordinary. This is what the antichrists are unwilling to see. That is why, when they see another in a group who, always lays themselves bare and says they have been negative and rebellious against God, and in what matters they erred yesterday, and that today, they are suffering and in pain for not having been an honest person, the antichrists never say such things, but keep them hidden deep inside. There are some who speak little because they are poor of caliber and simple of mind, and do not have many thoughts, so the words they say are few. The antichrists' ilk speaks little, too, but this is not why—rather, it is a problem in their disposition. They speak little when they see others, and when others speak of a matter, they would not offer an opinion lightly. Why do they not offer their opinions? First of all, they certainly do not have the truth and cannot see through to the heart of any matter; as soon as they speak, they make mistakes, and others will see them for what they are. So, they affect silence and depth, rendering others unable to gauge them accurately, and even making them think they are brilliant and exceptional. This way, no one will think them trivial; seeing their calm, composed demeanor, people will**

think much of them, and not dare slight them. This is the slyness and evil of the antichrists; that they do not readily offer opinions is part and parcel of this disposition of theirs. They do not readily offer opinions not because they do not have them—they have some fallacious and warped opinions, opinions that do not accord at all with the truth, and even some opinions that cannot see the light of day—yet, no matter which sort of opinions they have, they do not offer them freely. They do not offer them freely not because they fear others might take credit for them, but because they want to hide them; they dare not lay their opinions out plainly for fear of being seen for what they are. ... They know their own measure, and they have another motive, the most shameful of all: They wish to be held in high regard. Is that not most repugnant?” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. For Leaders and Workers, Choosing a Path Is of Utmost Importance (4)).

Every one of God’s words struck me to the core. I always clung to the ideas that “Silence is gold” and “He who talks a lot errs a lot.” It seemed that I was merely protecting my own image, afraid of saying the wrong thing and being laughed at and humiliated, but the crux of the issue was that I wanted to gain status in others’ eyes. I wanted everything I said, all the opinions I expressed to gain others’ admiration and approval, to get a “thumbs up” from them. To that end, I was disingenuous and disguised myself, always racking my brains, obsessing over everything I said and did so that I would look like a thoughtful, insightful person. In discussions with supervisors, I was particularly preoccupied with protecting my image and status, so I didn’t dare share my opinions, thinking it wouldn’t be a problem if I were right, but if I weren’t, I’d reveal my lack of understanding. Then if the supervisors were unimpressed and I lost my duty, my status among everyone else would be totally ruined. Harboring these sinister motives, I just kept my mouth

shut, afraid to open up about my thoughts and opinions, not even daring to utter a simple “I’m not sure I understand this.” That was despicable, so shameful! I realized that in my collaboration with others in my duty and day-to-day interactions with brothers and sisters, I was quiet and appeared to be honest on the outside, but inside, I was harboring craftiness. I was hiding my ugliness, disguising myself and misleading others. And even in gatherings when we were fellowshiping on the truth and talking over problems, I would still try to go with the flow, hoping to safeguard my status and image in others’ eyes. I loved my own image and reputation much more than I loved the truth and righteousness—this was entirely the crafty and evil disposition of an antichrist that I was revealing. At this point in my reflection, I saw how dangerous my state was. I thought about how in the Age of Grace, God said to those who failed to do His will: **“And then will I profess to them, I never knew you: depart from Me, you that work iniquity”** (Matthew 7:23). I had faith, but I didn’t put God’s words into practice, and I wasn’t taking practical action in order to satisfy God; I wasn’t able to open up to brothers and sisters in fellowship and be honest. Instead, I was always covering up my undesirable side, trying everything to protect my image and mislead others so that they would look up to me. I was struggling with God for status, and I was on an antichrist’s path of opposing God. I knew that if I didn’t repent, I would ultimately be eliminated by God. Understanding this finally filled me with revulsion for my corrupt nature and also made me see how perilous it would be to continue in that kind of pursuit. I had to come before God and repent as soon as possible, forsake the flesh, and put God’s words into practice.

When I opened up to brothers and sisters about my state after that, a sister sent me a passage of God’s words: **“When people do their duty or any work before God, their heart must be pure like a bowl of water—**

crystal clear—their attitude must be correct. What kind of attitude is correct? No matter what it is that you're doing, you are able to share with others whatever is on your heart, whatever ideas you may have. If they say your idea won't work and make a different suggestion, you listen and say, 'Good idea, let's go with it. Mine was no good, lacking insight, undeveloped.' From your words and deeds, everyone will see that you have crystal-clear principles in your conduct, there's no darkness in your heart, and you act and speak sincerely, relying on an attitude of honesty. You call a spade a spade. If it is, it is; if it isn't, it isn't. No tricks, no secrets, just a very transparent person. Isn't that a kind of attitude? This is an attitude toward people, events and things that is representative of this person's disposition" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only by Practicing the Truth Can One Possess Normal Humanity). I read this passage of God's words, too: **"God tells people not to be deceitful, but to be honest, to speak honestly and do honest things. The significance of God saying this is to allow people to have a true human likeness, so that they do not have the likeness of Satan, who speaks like a snake slithering along the ground, always equivocating, obfuscating the truth of the matter. That is, it is said so that people, in both word or deed, can live a life that is dignified and upright, without a dark side, without anything shameful, with a clean heart, with what is outside in harmony with what is inside; they say whatever they think in their heart and they don't cheat anyone or cheat God, keeping nothing back, with their heart like a piece of pure land. This is God's objective by requiring people to be honest people"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Man Is the Greatest Beneficiary of God's Management Plan). I saw in these passages that God likes honest people. An honest person is simple and forthright, without any deceit or craftiness toward God, and they are

guileless with others. They speak out what is in their heart without twisting it, so that both God and man can see their true heart. This is how a person should present themselves—upright and aboveboard. An honest person loves the truth and loves positive things, so they more easily gain the truth and can be perfected by God. I, on the other hand, couldn't say a single true word from the heart in my interactions and collaborations with others. There was no transparency in my speech and actions—I was shady and cunning, and there was no way I'd be able to understand and gain the truth. In fact, God knows my caliber inside and out, as well as how deep my understanding of the truth is. Disguising myself may be able to fool other people, but it will never fool God. God could see how evil and disgusting it was that I was always playing games and being dishonest, so there was no way He would work to guide me. However, putting the truth into practice as God requires and being an honest person, opening up to others whether I'm mistaken or not in my perspective, won't be so exhausting for me, and it brings God joy, too. Additionally, it's only by opening my mouth that I can learn where I'm mistaken; then other people can give me pointers and help me, which is the only way for me to make progress. Even though it means I lose a little bit of face, it's very beneficial for my understanding of the truth and my growth in life.

Before, I really had no idea how to conduct myself. But once God took us by the hand to teach us how to speak and act, we could live out a human likeness. I came to understand God's earnest intentions and I felt really encouraged, and also gained a path of practice. After that, when working with brothers and sisters or communicating with supervisors in my duty, I started working to open up and not be secretive, to stop protecting my reputation and status. I tried to share what I truly thought, to be straightforward with brothers and sisters. I could openly tell brothers and

sisters that my ideas weren't thought through very well, that my understanding was shallow or my thinking was simplistic, and they were welcome to correct what was lacking. Practicing doing this was really freeing for me. On top of that, saying something wrong wasn't humiliating; in fact, it was constantly disguising myself and creating a false front to get others to admire me that was hypocritical and shameless. Before long, I started working alongside the sister that had been in the team the longest. She did pretty well in our work and in fellowship on the truth, so I was reluctant to express my views in my work with her so that I wouldn't reveal my shortcomings, and I'd seem more sensible. When that idea reared its head, I immediately realized that I was once again wanting to disguise myself, so I prayed to God and forsook myself. In my work discussions with that sister from then on, I no longer held myself back, but volunteered to share my perspective. These mutual discussions helped me see if my perspective really was valid or not, and where it might be flawed. She was able to see my weaknesses and give me suggestions accordingly. This kind of collaboration allowed me to make progress in my work and in the realm of grasping the principles. My experience was that by voluntarily communicating and having discourse with others, being an honest person, and by doing my duty facing God directly, the darkness in my heart faded quite a bit, and I felt much more at ease. I also started doing much better in my duty. I give heartfelt thanks for God's guidance!

17. A Poor Caliber Is No Excuse

By Zhuiqu, China

In the past, every time I was faced with some difficulties when performing my duty, or did my work badly, I thought it was because my caliber was too poor. As a result, I often lived in a negative, passive state. I would frequently use my poor caliber as an excuse to offload duties I felt hard onto other people, and felt there was nothing wrong with this, that I was thinking of the church work when I asked other people to do something because my caliber was poor, and I couldn't do it well. It was only thanks to reading the words of God that I turned this erroneous view around, realizing that I was looking at things through my own conceptions and imaginings. I also learned something about my own corrupt disposition.

One day, our leader asked us to write a letter to support a sister. The sister I was teamed up with was busy with something else, so she asked me to handle it. I quickly started making excuses: "My caliber is too poor. I'm bad at writing and editing text. It would be better if you handle it." Thus did I automatically push anything tricky onto my partner. Later, she said to me, "Right from when we met, you've been saying your caliber is poor. But after being with you for a few days I've noticed you're capable of finding some problems in the work. I don't think your caliber is that poor, but whenever you're faced with any difficulty in performing your duty, you always say your caliber's poor, and sometimes you even push your duty onto someone else. I don't know what your motivation in always going on about how your caliber is poor is—it feels to me like you're being really fake!" Hearing her say this, I was speechless, but my heart was filled with antipathy: "When I say my caliber's poor, I'm telling the truth. You don't know the facts, and you've misunderstood me." Afterward, I mulled over

why the sister had said that. I wasn't lying when I said my caliber was poor—how could she say I had motivations? In my heart, I just couldn't figure it out.

Once, during assembly with my co-workers, I opened up about my confusion to the other brothers and sisters. I went through the reasons why I thought my caliber was poor, one by one: For example, I typed really slowly, my writing style wasn't very good. When we worked on texts, my partner did most of the typing and editing, and when it came to the church work, she found problems really quickly, whereas I was slower, and so on. After hearing what I said, our leader Brother Liu said, "Sister, is it upon these things that we measure whether someone's caliber is good or poor? Is it in line with the truth? Is it in line with God's will? We all know that people in the world value gift and brain very much. Whoever is quick-witted, articulate, and proficient at handling matters of the outside world is a person of good caliber, while those who are clumsy of speech, ignorant and ill-educated are seen as having poor caliber; that's how the unbelievers see it. We who believe in God should look at things based on the words of God. Have we sought God's will in this matter? Upon what basis does God measure whether people's caliber is good or poor? And just what is good and poor caliber?" I was shaking my head, and Brother Liu continued fellowshiping: "Let us read a passage of God's words: **'How do we measure people's caliber? The most accurate way is to measure their caliber based on the degree to which they understand the truth. Some people can learn some specialism very quickly, but when they hear the truth, they become muddled and they doze off, it baffles them, nothing they hear goes in, nor do they understand what they are hearing—that is what poor caliber is. With some people, you tell them they are of poor caliber and they disagree. They think that being highly educated**

and knowledgeable means they are of good caliber. Does a good education demonstrate high caliber? It does not. People's caliber is measured based on the degree to which they understand God's words and the truth. This is the most standard, the most accurate way of doing it. There is no use in trying to measure someone's caliber by any other means. Some people are silver-tongued and quick-witted, and they are really good at getting on with others—but when they read God's words and listen to sermons, they understand nothing. When they speak of their own experiences and testimony, they reveal themselves to be mere amateurs, and all can feel that they have no spiritual understanding. These are not people of good caliber' (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Understanding the Truth Is Crucial to Fulfilling One's Duty Properly). From these words of God, we see that whether someone's caliber is good or poor depends on their ability to understand God's words. This is not what the unbelievers mean when they say someone has a good caliber or is gifted and smart. People who are of good caliber can understand God's will when they finish reading His words, they can find a path to practice and enter into the truth, and are able to practice according to what God asks. On the other hand, there are those who seem very smart and are great at handling matters of the outside world—but they're confounded as soon as they're faced with the truths of God's words. Such people cannot be said to be of good caliber. It's like how some knowledgeable, educated people seem gifted and brainy on the outside, yet are incapable of understanding the truths of God's words. Some of them even have a ridiculous perspective on things. And so, being highly educated, quick-witted, and capable is not representative of good caliber, nor are these the standards by which someone's caliber is measured. What's key is whether people understand the spirit, whether they are capable of understanding the

truth. We cannot rely on our own conceptions and imaginings to measure whether someone's caliber is good or poor!" Hearing this, I suddenly saw the light: It turned out my beliefs were nothing but my own conceptions and imaginings—they did not conform to the truth.

Next, a sister found two passages of God's words and asked me to read them. God's words say: **"How God treats people does not hinge on how old they are, what kind of environment they were born in, or how talented they are. Rather, He treats people based on their attitude toward the truth, and this attitude is related to their dispositions. If you have a correct attitude regarding the truth, one of acceptance and humility, then even if you are of poor caliber, God will still enlighten you and allow you to gain something. If you are of good caliber but are always arrogant, constantly thinking that you are right, and are unwilling to accept anything anyone else says and are always resisting it, then God will not work in you. He will say that this person has a bad disposition and is not worthy of receiving anything, and He will even take away what you once had. This is what is known as being exposed"**

(The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only by Practicing the Truth Can One Possess Normal Humanity).

"When one can be serious, responsible, dedicated, and hard-working, the work will be done properly. Sometimes, you do not have such a heart, and you cannot find or discover a mistake that is clear as day. Were one to have such a heart, then, with the prompting and guidance of the Holy Spirit, they would be able to identify the issue. But if the Holy Spirit guided you and gave you such awareness, allowing you to sense that something is wrong, yet you did not have such a heart, you would still be incapable of identifying the problem. So, what does this show? It shows that it is very important that people cooperate; their hearts are very important, and where they direct their

thoughts and intentions is very important. God scrutinizes and can see what people hold in their hearts as they perform their duty, and how much energy they exert. It is crucial that people put all their heart and strength into what they do. Cooperation, too, is a crucial component. Only if people strive to have no regrets about the duties they have completed and the things they have done, and not to be in debt to God, will they be acting with all their heart and strength” (The Word, Vol. 3. The

Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. How to Solve the Problem of Being Careless and Perfunctory When Performing Your Duty). After I read God’s words, the sister said, “God’s words show that our attitude when performing our duty is very important—it’s crucial. If we have the right mentality, if we can give all our heart and energy to performing our duty, God will see, and will treat us according to our attitude toward our duty. Even if we are of poor caliber, God will still enlighten and guide us. If we are of good caliber, but we do not have the right mentality, and are not willing to pay a price and cooperate with God, or if we are arrogant and hold to ourselves, or work only to gain fame and fortune, then not only will we not perform our duty properly, but will also be rejected by God. This is God’s righteousness. If we look at the brothers and sisters around us through the words of God, we see that some are of ordinary caliber but have the right motivation in performing their duty; faced with difficulty, they take it upon themselves to seek the truth, and focus on entry into principles, and they become increasingly effective in performing their duty. Whereas there are some brothers and sisters who seem to us to be of especially good caliber, and who have a pure understanding of God’s words, but they are conceited, self-satisfied, don’t listen to other people’s advice, and take God’s glory for themselves whenever they have some small success in performing their duty. They show themselves off every chance they got, struggling for profit and fame.

Some disrupt the work of the church and are stripped of their eligibility to perform their duty; some become antichrists after committing many evil acts and are expelled from the church. These facts show us that whether a person's caliber is good or poor doesn't determine whether they are praised by God; what's key is whether or not they pursue the truth and do their duties with their whole heart and mind."

Next, the brothers and sisters drew upon their own experiences to talk about the dangers and consequences of defining themselves according to their own conceptions and imaginings. Only then did I realize how stupid not understanding the truth was; I had not sought the truth, and had instead defined myself to be of poor caliber by living in my conceptions and imaginings, to the point that I often pushed difficult duties onto other people. I didn't try to improve, nor did I rely on God or actually pay a price to break through these barriers, which even made me incapable of performing the duties I was capable of. I was not only incapable of actual training, or growing in the truth and the life, but this directly influenced my effectiveness in performing my duty. I thought about how quickly the sister I worked with was able to find problems. Though this was connected to her inherent caliber, more important was that, because of her conscientious and responsible attitude toward her duty, she was able to rely on God and face difficulties head-on when she came across them. Only then was she enlightened and illuminated by the Holy Spirit. I, on the other hand, tried to avoid problems when I encountered them, and used poor caliber as an excuse to let myself off the hook. I didn't rely on God and take it upon myself to try and solve the problem by seeking the relevant truth, which meant I was not able to gain the Holy Spirit's work. From this, I saw that God is fair and righteous to all. Through fellowship, I also recognized that God asks of us based on what we are capable of. It is not a case of Him

“herding ducks onto a perch.” I should do right by myself; instead of paying attention to my caliber, I should focus only on putting all my energy into performing my duty. I should seek and contemplate the principles of the truth, learn from the strengths of others, listen to other people’s advice, and incorporate it into what I actually practiced—and over time, I would be sure to benefit and grow.

Afterward, the sister’s criticism of me echoed in my ears: “I don’t know what your motivation in always going on about how your caliber is poor is.” She was right—I was always quick to say my caliber was poor. What motivations and corrupt disposition were secretly controlling me?

One day, I read these words of God: **“You should examine yourself carefully to see whether you are a correct person. Are your goals and intentions made with Me in mind? Are all your words and actions said and done in My presence? I examine all of your thoughts and ideas. Do you not feel guilty? You put on a false front for others to see and you calmly assume an air of self-righteousness; you do this to shield yourself. You do this to conceal your evil, and you even think up ways to push that evil onto someone else. What treachery dwells in your heart!”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 13). After reading God’s words, I began to reflect on myself: When faced with a duty I had never done before, the first thing I would do was tell the other brothers and sisters that my caliber was poor, because I was afraid they would think little of me if I did the duty badly. I did this for the sake of my own fame and status. The implication was, it’s not my fault if I do it badly; it’s not that I haven’t put all my energy into it, but that it’s beyond my caliber. Whenever I encountered any difficulty in performing my duty, I was unwilling to suffer and pay a price to face it head-on. I was afraid of responsibility, too. So I just used my poor caliber as an excuse to

push my duties onto someone else, to make them think I was rational and self-aware. Almost every time I had to suffer hardship and pay a price or had to shoulder some responsibility, I'd step back. Actually, I was living by the satanic interpersonal philosophy of "Sensible people are good at self-protection, seeking only to avoid making mistakes." It seemed pretty smart—using my own devious means to avoid responsibility—but in actuality I had missed out on many opportunities to seek and understand the truth. In fact, the caliber that God gives each one of us is fit for purpose; yet I had not exerted all my heart and energy based on what I was capable of achieving, in order to gain the work of the Holy Spirit and do my duty well; instead, I always used my poor caliber as an excuse for not practicing the truth, to try to trick and deceive God. Is this not so crafty, so evil? And how could I be guided by God thus?

God's words say, **"Though my caliber is low, I have an honest heart.' When most people hear this line, they feel good, don't they? This matter involves God's requirements of people. What requirements? If people are lacking in caliber, it is not the end of the world, but they must possess an honest heart and, as such, will be able to receive God's praise. No matter what your situation, you must be an honest person, speak honestly, act honestly, be able to perform your duty with all your heart and mind, and be faithful, and you must not shirk your work, be sly or deceitful, be crafty, try to outwit others, or talk in circles; you must be a person who loves the truth and pursues the truth. ... You say, 'My caliber is low, but I am honest at heart.'** When a duty falls to you, however, you are afraid of suffering or that if you do not fulfill it well, you will have to bear the responsibility, so you make excuses to shirk it and recommend others to do it. Is this an expression of an honest person? It clearly is not. How, then, should an

honest person behave? They should accept and obey, and then be utterly devoted in doing their duties to the best of their ability, striving to meet God's will. This is expressed in several ways. One way is that you should accept your duty with honesty, not think about anything else, and not be half-hearted about it. Do not plot for your own benefit. This is an expression of honesty. Another way is putting all your strength and heart into it. You say, 'This is everything I can do; I will put it all into play, and dedicate it completely to God.' Is this not an expression of honesty? You dedicate all you have and all you can do—this is an expression of honesty” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. People Can Only Truly Be Happy by Being Honest). God's words offered me a path to practice: God does not care whether people's caliber is good or poor; what's key is whether they have a heart that is honest, whether they can accept the truth, and put it into practice. Although my caliber is poor, and I'm a little slower in understanding the truth, and sometimes follow doctrine, if my heart is honest, and I constantly pursue the truth to resolve my corrupt disposition as I perform my duty, if I do all I can to carry out what God asks, then I shall receive God's guidance and blessings, and will gradually be able to understand the truth. As I enter the truth I will be able to make up for my shortcomings with regard to my poor caliber, and I will get better and better at understanding and seeing things. After understanding God's will, I began to rely on God to get better when I performed my duty. No longer did I offload the things that were not evident to me, that I didn't understand, onto other people, but tried hard to seek and work them out for myself. Thanks be to God! When I practiced as God asks, I too was able to see problems in my duty—and although there were times when relatively complex issues remained unclear to me, by searching for the principles of the truth with the brothers and sisters, they gradually

became apparent to me, and I felt lighter and more liberated when I performed my duty.

Thanks to experiencing the environment set out for me by God, I gained some knowledge of my corruption and shortcomings, and became aware of how to face issues to do with my caliber. When I was performing my duty in the past, I did not focus on seeking the truth, nor did I try to address my corrupt disposition. I always saw things through my own conceptions and imaginings, which led me to often delineate myself, and to try to get out of things by saying my caliber was poor. My performance of duty was full of perfunctoriness, I held up the work of the church, and suffered loss in my own life. Now I understand that everyone's caliber is preordained by God and is part of God's glorious intentions. I should not be constrained by whether my caliber is good or poor. In the future, I will try to seek the truth in all things, act with principle, and be someone honest to satisfy God.

18. Harmed by My Misunderstandings and Guardedness

By Suxing, China

Some time ago, our church leader lost her position because she didn't pursue the truth or do practical work, and the other brothers and sisters elected me to take her place. The outcome of the election left me concerned. Being a leader requires an understanding of the truth and an ability to resolve others' difficulties in their life entry. It also means taking on a burden and doing practical work. I'd served as a leader a few times before, but always ended up being replaced because I was pursuing name and status and failed to do practical work. I knew that if I didn't do my job well this time around, aside from impeding the work of God's house and church members' life entry, at best I'd be dismissed, and at worst I could be exposed and eliminated. I had no interest in being a leader again, in seeking higher status; I just wanted to keep my head down and do my duty properly. So, I turned it down on the spot, saying, "No, I'm not up to the task," and came up with all sorts of excuses. I felt confident that that was the reasonable, self-aware thing to do, but it was only through subsequent fellowship with brothers and sisters that I realized that my reluctance to take on a leadership role was because I was under the control of satanic poisons like "The bigger they are, the harder they fall" and "It's lonely at the top." I felt like being a leader was dangerous, that it would put me at risk of being exposed and eliminated at any moment. I understood in principle that my take on it wasn't in line with the truth, and I did accept the leadership duty, but I couldn't shake my anxieties surrounding my duty because I hadn't resolved that state of mine. I was afraid of performing poorly and being dismissed and eliminated, so I was living in a condition of

guardedness and misunderstandings. During that time, my state just continued to deteriorate; my prayers were uninspired, I didn't gain any light from reading God's words, and I couldn't muster up any enthusiasm for my duty. I was living in a total daze. In my pain, I called out to God: "Oh God! I'm so rebellious; I can't submit in the face of this duty. Please guide me, allow me to know myself and obey."

I read this passage of God's words after my prayer: **"I take pleasure in those who are not suspicious of others, and I like those who readily accept the truth; toward these two kinds of people I show great care, for in My eyes they are honest people. If you are deceitful, then you will be guarded and suspicious toward all people and matters, and thus your faith in Me will be built upon a foundation of suspicion. I could never acknowledge such faith. Lacking true faith, you are even more devoid of true love. And if you are liable to doubt God and speculate about Him at will, then you are, without question, the most deceitful of all people. You speculate whether God can be like man: unpardonably sinful, of petty character, devoid of fairness and reason, lacking a sense of justice, given to vicious tactics, treacherous and cunning, pleased by evil and darkness, and so on. Is not the reason that people have such thoughts because they lack the slightest knowledge of God? Such faith is nothing short of sin! There are even some who believe that the ones who please Me are precisely those who flatter and bootlick, and that those lacking in such skills will be unwelcome in the house of God and will lose their place there. Is this the only knowledge you have acquired after all these years? Is this what you have gained? And your knowledge of Me does not stop at these misunderstandings; even worse is your blasphemy against God's Spirit and vilification of Heaven. This is why I say that such faith as yours will only cause you to stray further**

from Me and be in greater opposition against Me” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. How to Know the God on Earth). God’s words of judgment and revelation struck fear into my heart, particularly the part where He says, **“And your knowledge of Me does not stop at these misunderstandings; even worse is your blasphemy against God’s Spirit and vilification of Heaven.”** That was incredibly poignant for me. Being in that state of defensiveness and delusions was me resisting and blaspheming God. I thought about how all those times I’d been dismissed from a leadership role, it was because I didn’t pursue the truth, but I was just chasing after name and status, trying to get people to adore me and look up to me. I was on a path contrary to God. After being removed from my position, it was God’s words that led me to understand His will; it was God’s words that guided me out from my failure and negativity. And even after that, God still gave me a chance to continue doing my duty, to pursue the truth and attain His salvation over the course of performing my duty. I realized that God had no intention of exposing and eliminating me, but I was full of speculation and doubts, thinking that God was going to use my service as a leader to expose and get rid of me. That was entirely a misunderstanding of God—it was blasphemy! This finally stirred my rebellious heart a bit, and I saw that even though I had been dismissed a few times, I’d never used those experiences as an opportunity to seek the truth and reflect on myself. Instead, my misunderstandings of God and my guardedness just grew. I became filled with guilt and regret.

I read another passage of God’s words after that: **“In the moment corrupt people gain status—regardless of who they are—do they then become antichrists? (If they do not pursue the truth, then they will become antichrists, but if they do pursue the truth, then they will not.) This is not at all absolute. So, do those who walk the path of the antichrists take that**

path because of status? That happens when people do not take the right path. They have a good path to follow, yet they do not follow it; instead, they insist on following the evil one. This is akin to how people eat: Some do not consume food that can nurture their bodies and support a normal existence, but instead insist on consuming things that do them harm, ultimately shooting themselves in the foot. Is this not their own choice? What is it that some of those who have served as leaders and then been eliminated go around disseminating? ‘Don’t be a leader, and don’t let yourself gain status. People are in danger the minute they gain any status, and God will expose them! Once they are exposed, they will not even be qualified to be ordinary believers, and will no longer have any opportunities whatsoever.’ What sort of thing is that to say? At best, it represents a misunderstanding of God; at worst, it is blasphemy against Him. If you do not walk the right path, do not pursue the truth, and do not follow God’s way, but instead you insist on going the way of the antichrists and end up on Paul’s path, ultimately meeting the same outcome, the same end as Paul, still blaming God and passing judgment on God as unrighteous, then are you not the genuine article of an antichrist? Such behavior is cursed!” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of

the Last Days. To Resolve One’s Corrupt Disposition, One Must Have a Specific Path of Practice).

This passage of God’s words showed me that when people take the path of an antichrist and are eliminated, it’s not because they’ve been damaged by the trappings of status. It’s rooted in a failure to pursue the truth; it’s rooted in constantly pursuing fame and gain, in showing off and wanting to be adulated, sometimes even to the point of doing evil and hindering the work of the church. Taking a closer look, I saw that my previous failures hadn’t been because of my position, but because I had an arrogant disposition and didn’t pursue the truth in my duty. Instead, I was pursuing name and status,

and wasn't properly upholding my duties. Plenty of other brothers and sisters had the position of a leader too, but they took the right path. They focused on self-reflection and self-knowledge when they revealed corruption, experienced failure, or committed a transgression; they focused on seeking the truth to resolve their own corrupt disposition, on doing things according to the truth principles. They also became more and more successful in their work over time. Having status really shows someone's true colors. For someone who pursues the truth, no matter how high of a position they hold, they won't be driven to do evil, but for those who do not pursue the truth, they'll be eliminated in the end even if they aren't in a position of power. Gaining an understanding of all of this also helped me realize why I was so resistant to being chosen as a leader, and why I made excuses not to take that on. It was mainly because even after being dismissed a few times, I still didn't pursue the truth or reflect on the root of my failures, but instead I thought it was the status I held that had caused me to stumble time and again. I also clung to fallacies like "The bigger they are, the harder they fall" and "It's lonely at the top" as if they were the truth. So when the brothers and sisters chose me as a leader again, I didn't submit and happily take it on, but instead tried to protect myself, afraid that if I served as a leader I'd be exposed and dismissed yet again, or I would end up doing evil and being driven out. How absurd I was!

I read this in God's words, too: **"There is no correlation between the duty of man and whether he is blessed or cursed. Duty is what man ought to fulfill; it is his heaven-sent vocation, and should not depend on recompense, conditions, or reasons. Only then is he doing his duty. To be blessed is when someone is made perfect and enjoys God's blessings after experiencing judgment. To be cursed is when someone's disposition does not change after they have experienced chastisement**

and judgment, it is when they do not experience being made perfect but are punished. But regardless of whether they are blessed or cursed, created beings should fulfill their duty, doing what they ought to do, and doing what they are able to do; this is the very least that a person, a person who pursues God, should do. You should not do your duty only to be blessed, and you should not refuse to act for fear of being cursed. Let Me tell you this one thing: Man's performance of his duty is what he ought to do, and if he is incapable of performing his duty, then this is his rebelliousness" (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The

Difference Between the Ministry of God Incarnate and the Duty of Man). I could see from God's words that a person's duty isn't the deciding factor for whether they're ultimately blessed or cursed; rather, that's mainly based on whether they pursue the truth in their duty, whether they end up gaining the truth and achieving dispositional change. I felt so ashamed in light of God's words, and I saw that in all my years of faith, I'd just been madly chasing after my personal future and destination. At first, I thought that having a leadership position in God's house would gain others' esteem and God's approval, that I'd end up being blessed and having a good final destination. That drove me to exert myself enthusiastically, to suffer for my duty. But after being dismissed multiple times, I became afraid of being exposed and eliminated as a leader, so I became reluctant to take on that duty. I realized that I was doing my duty in a transactional way, to secure a good destination from God. I even wanted God to personally guarantee that I could be saved before I was willing to make some sacrifices and expend some effort. I rejected God's commission for me in order to protect myself, twisting logic and grasping for excuses, saying I was afraid of standing in the way of the church's work. I even thought I was being perfectly reasonable—it was just the opposite! At that point, I felt terrible when I read this in God's words:

“Man’s performance of his duty is what he ought to do, and if he is incapable of performing his duty, then this is his rebelliousness.” It was simply a fact that I lacked the truth reality and my stature was inadequate. God giving me the chance to act as a leader wasn’t because I was capable of taking on that role, but it was in the hope that I would pursue the truth through the performance of my duty, that I would work on my personal flaws and manage to perform my duty satisfactorily. But instead, I was selfish and despicable, just thinking of myself, afraid that if I were exposed and replaced as a leader, I’d lose out on a good outcome and destination. And so I racked my brains to get out of it. I was incredibly rebellious—how could I claim to have a modicum of submission to God?

I read a couple more passages of God’s words in my seeking. **“Peter’s work was the performance of the duty of a creature of God. He did not work in the role of an apostle, but worked whilst pursuing the love for God. The course of Paul’s work also contained his personal pursuit: His pursuit was for the sake of nothing more than his hopes for the future, and his desire for a good destination. He did not accept refinement during his work, nor did he accept pruning and dealing. He believed that as long as the work he did satisfied God’s desire, and all that he did was pleasing to God, then a reward ultimately awaited him. There were no personal experiences in his work—it was all for its own sake, and not carried out amid the pursuit of change. Everything in his work was a transaction, it contained none of the duty or submission of a creature of God. During the course of his work, there occurred no change in Paul’s old disposition. His work was merely of service to others, and was incapable of bringing about changes in his disposition. Paul carried out his work directly, without having been made perfect or dealt with, and he was motivated by reward. Peter was different: He**

was someone who had undergone pruning and dealing and had undergone refinement. The aim and motivation of the work of Peter were fundamentally different to those of Paul” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Success or Failure Depends on the Path That Man Walks). **“As a creature of God, man should seek to perform the duty of a creature of God, and seek to love God without making other choices, for God is worthy of man’s love. Those who seek to love God should not seek any personal benefits or seek that which they personally long for; this is the most correct means of pursuit. If what you seek is the truth, if what you put into practice is the truth, and if what you attain is a change in your disposition, then the path that you tread is the right one. If what you seek is the blessings of the flesh, and what you put into practice is the truth of your own notions, and if there is no change in your disposition, and you are not at all obedient to God in the flesh, and you still live in vagueness, then what you seek will surely take you to hell, for the path that you walk is the path of failure. Whether you will be made perfect or eliminated depends on your own pursuit, which is also to say that success or failure depends on the path that man walks”** (The Word, Vol. 1.

The Appearance and Work of God. Success or Failure Depends on the Path That Man Walks). Reading these passages helped me better understand Peter’s path to success and Paul’s path to failure. I saw that Peter sought to do the duty of a created being, and he submitted to God whether his duty would bring him blessings or not. He acted as a resounding witness for God, obedient even to the point of death. Paul, on the other hand, sought blessings and rewards, and his hard work was to gain a crown of righteousness. He used his work as capital to barter with God, taking the path of an antichrist and ultimately earning God’s punishment. When I reflected on myself, I saw that in my faith, I wasn’t trying to do the duty of a created being, but I was doing it for

the sake of blessings and a good destination. I also wanted to pay the most minimal price possible in exchange for the blessings of the kingdom of heaven. When I saw the duty of leadership involves great responsibilities, I thought that if I did end up standing in the way of the work of God's house, I'd lose my chance at a good outcome and destination. That's why I was really resistant to that. Wasn't I on exactly the same path of failure as Paul? Through my faith, I'd gotten to enjoy so many truths expressed by God, but it never occurred to me to give something back. Instead, I was just trying to figure out what my own future would be, being calculating and trying to cheat God. I was so selfish, despicable, crafty, and wicked! After I realized all this, I no longer wanted to live that way, but truly wanted to follow Peter's example and step onto the path of pursuing the truth, to give myself over to God and submit to His rule and arrangements.

I give thanks to God for the judgment and chastisement of His words which corrected my false notion that "It's lonely at the top" and allowed me to clearly see that I was on the wrong path in my faith, the path of pursuing blessings, and gain some understanding of my cunning satanic nature. From then on, I stopped trying to get out of my duty as a leader and shouldered the responsibility. I started to focus on pursuing the truth and seeking to do my duty as a created being.

19. I've Learned How to Treat People Properly

By Siyuan, France

A couple of years ago, I was doing the duty of a church leader. There was a brother surnamed Chen in the church who was of good caliber. But his disposition was so arrogant, and he tended to stifle others. He loved showing off, so I started developing biases against him and forming opinions of him. One day, Brother Chen came up to me and said he wanted to water new believers. He hadn't believed in God for long and had a superficial understanding of the truth, so I said no. Seeing I wouldn't give my consent, he said, "I have such a good caliber, why shouldn't I be on watering duty? If I don't go do it, it would be a waste of my talents." I didn't take kindly to this, and I thought, "You think watering duty is so easy? Can you do this duty well using only your gifts and caliber, without understanding the truth? Don't flatter yourself!" I refused Brother Chen's request and told other brothers and sisters how arrogant he was, giving examples of lots of ways he showed corruption. Some of the others agreed with me.

Two weeks later, the church made arrangements that in future gatherings, we could watch church movies as well as read Almighty God's words. These movies all fellowshiped on the truth and testified to God, so watching them could help us understand the truth. At the next gathering, Brother Chen said, "This is a great plan. Some leaders and co-workers just share platitudes in gatherings, so it's better to watch movies. I found my duty really hard at first because I didn't understand the truth. But then I prayed, leaned on God, and read God's words more, and these church movies have helped me a lot, too. I've understood some truths from them. Now I'm pretty skilled in my duty and have a basic grasp on the principles.

I achieve a lot in my duty.” I found his fellowship repugnant and beyond the pale, and I thought, “You really grab every little chance to show off, don’t you? You’re so arrogant!” We later lined up a few issues to be dealt with at our next gathering and Brother Chen jumped in to hog three of them. He also assigned the remaining issues to others to give fellowship on. Just as I was assigning a group leader to host the gathering, Brother Chen asked him in a doubtful tone, “Are you sure you can do it?” Hearing him say this as if only he could possibly host the gathering, I became angry, and thought, “You’re so unreasonable. You’re just showing off to get others to look up to you. If that’s what you’re after, then you can forget it.” So I rearranged everything and didn’t allow him to host the gathering. Over that period of time, I felt such distaste for Brother Chen whenever I thought about his behavior, especially how I’d mentioned his arrogant behavior to him a couple of times and he still hadn’t changed. I felt he was way too arrogant, that it knew no bounds. So I pegged him as a person who couldn’t change and decided that someone as arrogant as him was simply not suited to do his duty. I thought I had to just replace him and that would be that.

When the gathering ended, I thought of my own state and behavior, and felt a little bad. I felt I was being too harsh with Brother Chen, so I prayed to God, saying, “Oh God, I know my state is wrong, but I don’t know what my problem is or which principles of the truth to enter into. Please enlighten and guide me.” The next day during devotionals, I read these words of God: **“According to which principle should you treat the members of God’s family? (Treat each and every brother and sister fairly.) How do you treat them fairly? Everyone has minor faults and shortcomings, as well as certain idiosyncrasies; people all possess self-righteousness, weakness, and areas in which they are lacking. You should help them with a loving heart, be tolerant and forbearing, and**

not be too harsh or make a fuss over every tiny detail. With people who are young or who have not believed in God for very long, or have only recently started to perform their duties, these people who have certain special requests, if you just grab hold of these things and use them against them, then you are being harsh. You ignore the evil done by those false leaders and antichrists, and yet upon spotting minor shortcomings and faults in your brothers and sisters, you refuse to help them, instead choosing to make a fuss over those things and judge them behind their backs, thereby causing even more people to oppose, exclude, and ostracize them. What sort of behavior is this? This is just you doing things based on your personal preferences, and not being able to treat people fairly. This shows a corrupt satanic disposition and it is a transgression! When people do things, God is watching; whatever you do and however you think, He sees!” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of

Christ of the Last Days. To Gain the Truth, You Must Learn From the People, Matters, and Things Around You). God’s words showed me my state and I felt ashamed. I saw that I was dealing with Brother Chen through my corrupt disposition. Thinking back over the time since I met him, I saw that he often revealed his arrogance in his words and deeds, and so I felt he was young and brash, and didn’t know himself. At the slightest mention of him, I thought of nothing but his faults. I clung to his expressions of corruption, deciding that he was arrogant beyond all reason, and that people like that could never change. So I was never able to treat him fairly. I felt resistant and averse to any views he expressed. I judged and belittled him in front of others, spread my biases about him, and got others to exclude and ostracize him along with me. I even wanted to dismiss him from his duty. Wasn’t I using my position as a leader to suppress and beat him down? I took my views and beliefs to be the truth, as criteria to judge people, as though I could know everything about

someone at a glance and see their very essence. I was so arrogant and conceited. I was deeply corrupted by Satan, without the principles of the truth, and had absurd views much of the time, but I still arbitrarily judged and condemned others. I had no sense whatsoever! I didn't have any reverence for God. I treated brothers and sisters however I liked and lived out a demonic nature. It was so repugnant for God, so disgusting to others. I was filled with guilt at that thought.

Afterward, I looked in God's words for the principles on how to treat people fairly. I found two passages of God's words: **"How you are to treat others is clearly shown or hinted at in God's words; the attitude with which God treats humanity is the attitude people should adopt in their treatment of one another. How does God treat each and every person? Some people are of immature stature, or are young, or have believed in God for only a short time. God might see these people as being neither bad nor malicious by nature essence; it is simply that they are somewhat ignorant or lacking in caliber, or that they have been polluted too much by society. They have not entered truth reality, so it is difficult for them to keep from doing some foolish things or committing some ignorant acts. However, from God's perspective, such matters are not important; He looks only at these people's hearts. If they are resolved to enter truth reality, if they are headed in the right direction, and this is their objective, then God is watching them, waiting for them, and giving them time and opportunities that allow them to enter. It is not the case that God knocks them down with one blow, nor is it that He grabs hold of a transgression they once committed and refuses to let go; He has never treated people like this. That being said, if people treat each other in such a manner, then does this not show their corrupt disposition? This is precisely their corrupt**

disposition. You have to look at how God treats ignorant and foolish people, how He treats those with immature stature, how He treats the normal manifestations of humanity's corrupt disposition, and how He treats those who are malicious. God treats different people in different ways, and He also has various ways of managing different people's myriad conditions. You must understand these truths. Once you have understood these truths, you will then know how to experience them"

(The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. To Gain the Truth, You Must Learn From the People, Matters, and Things Around You). **"You might be incompatible with someone's personality, and you may not like him, but when you work together with him, you remain impartial and will not vent your frustrations in doing your duty, sacrifice your duty, or take out your frustrations on the interests of God's family. You can do things according to principle; as such, you have a basic reverence for God. If you have a bit more than that, then when you see that someone has some faults or weaknesses—even if he has offended you or harmed your own interests—you still have it in you to help him. Doing so would be even better; it would mean that you are a person who possesses humanity, truth reality, and reverence for God"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The Five States Necessary to Be on the Right Track in One's Faith).

God's words are very clear on the principles and path to treating people fairly, as well as His attitude toward people. His attitude toward antichrists and wicked people is one of hate, curse, and punishment. As for those who are of small stature, poor caliber, and who have various corrupt dispositions and faults, as long as they truly believe in God, wish to pursue the truth, and can accept the truth, God's attitude is one of love, mercy, and salvation. We see that God is principled in His treatment of every single

person, and He asks that we treat others according to the principles of the truth. For example, we must be tolerant and forgiving to those who truly believe in God. We must help them out of love and give them chances to repent and change. We can't beat people down just because they express some corruption. That is not God's will. Take Brother Chen—he was of good caliber and was responsible in his duty. He was also willing to put effort into pursuing the truth. It was just that he was a new believer, his experience was shallow, and he was a little more arrogant than others. I should have been treating him fairly according to the principles of the truth and lovingly fellowshiping on the truth to help him. However, not only was I not helping him, refusing to see his strengths and good points, but I even judged and excluded him, and wanted him gone when seeing his shortcomings. I had such a malicious nature! I thought about how I'd been as a leader. At the time, I always thought I was better than others, I wanted to have the final say, do whatever I wanted, and I didn't listen to others' opinions. As a result, I did some things that disrupted the church's work. And yet God didn't eliminate me, but instead used His words to judge, discipline and deal with me, to have me reflect on myself, giving me a chance to repent and change. I saw that God never gives up on us or eliminates us just for expressing some corruption, but does all He can to save us. God has such a good heart! Then, considering my own behavior and how I was treating Brother Chen made me so ashamed that I wanted the ground to swallow me up.

I then read these words of God: **“As for whether someone is good or bad, and how he or she should be treated, people should have their own principles of behavior; however, as for what the outcome of that person will be—whether he or she ends up getting punished by God, or whether he or she ends up getting judged and chastised—that is God's**

business. People should not interfere; God would not allow you to take the initiative on His behalf. How to treat that person is God's business. As long as God has not decided what sort of outcome such people will have, has not expelled them, and has not punished them, and they are being saved, then you should help them patiently, out of love; you should not hope to determine the outcome of such people, nor should you use human means to crack down on them or punish them. You may deal with and prune such people, or you may open your heart and engage in heartfelt fellowship to help them. However, if you contemplate punishing, ostracizing, and framing these people, then you will be in trouble. Would doing so be in line with the truth? Having such thoughts would result from being hot-blooded; those thoughts come from Satan and originate from human resentment, as well as from human jealousy and loathing. Such conduct does not conform to the truth. This is something that would bring down retribution upon you, and is not in line with God's will" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The Five States Necessary to Be on the Right Track in One's Faith). God's words showed me that I should be principled in how I treated others. I couldn't randomly pigeonhole others using my notions and imaginings or focus on their transgressions, then condemn them. Instead, I should treat them based on their nature and essence, and help them in practical ways based on their different states and faults. Depending on other people's states, someone with the reality of the truth knows when to be patient and helpful, when to prune and deal with them harshly, and when to reproach them. They always act properly and with principle. They never randomly delimit someone or treat a brother or sister who expresses corruption as an enemy. But how had I been treating Brother Chen? When I saw him reveal an arrogant disposition, I just mentioned it briefly to him and when that

didn't work, I excluded, judged and condemned him, and talked about him behind his back. I had no tolerance or patience. In no way is that helping him with a loving heart. I then prayed and repented to God, wanting to practice the principles of the truth and help Brother Chen with a loving heart.

So I went to Brother Chen and fellowshiped with him on some passages of God's words and pointed out his faults. He began to understand his own arrogant disposition and he recognized the danger of leaving it unresolved. He said my fellowship and warning was really helpful, and he wanted to reflect on himself and seek the truth to resolve his corrupt disposition. I was so moved to hear him say this, but I also felt bad. He wasn't incapable of change like I'd imagined. It was me who hadn't done my duty well. I hadn't really tried to help him with a loving heart. I was so arrogant and devoid of humanity!

Later, at a gathering, I heard the brother from the Above give this sermon: "All of corrupt mankind possesses an arrogant disposition. Even those who love the truth and who pursue being perfected all have an arrogant and self-righteous disposition, though this does not affect their ability to attain salvation and be perfected. As long as people are able to accept the truth and accept pruning and dealing, and are able to absolutely submit to the truth no matter what the circumstances, then they are entirely capable of achieving salvation and being perfected. In fact, among those who are truly of good caliber and really have resolutions, there are none who are not arrogant. This is a fact. God's chosen people must treat others in the proper manner. They must not delimit someone as not a good person and as someone who cannot be saved and perfected simply because that person is extremely arrogant and self-righteous. ... On this point, one needs to understand God's will. There is no such person as one whose caliber is

good and who has resolution, and who is not at all arrogant or self-righteous; if there was, then that would most certainly be someone putting on a guise or a false outward appearance. One must know that all of corrupt mankind has an arrogant and conceited nature. This is an undeniable fact” (The Fellowship From the Above). This helped me better understand how to treat people with an arrogant disposition. It’s not that they’re unable to change. The key is to see whether they can pursue and accept the truth. If they can accept the truth, and accept God’s judgment, chastisement, pruning and dealing, then there’s no reason why they can’t change and be perfected by God. Brother Chen hadn’t been a believer very long, so he hadn’t experienced much judgment and chastisement. It was normal for his arrogance to be a little worse. But when I saw him reveal this disposition, I judged and excluded him, and even wanted to dismiss him from his duty. I was more arrogant than he was! I thought that as long as I pursued the truth, then my arrogant disposition would change, so why had I decided that Brother Chen couldn’t change? I didn’t demand much of myself, so why did I expect so much from Brother Chen? It was so unfair to treat someone that way. In reality, people who have gifts, strengths and caliber are all pretty arrogant. But because their caliber is good, they understand the truth quickly and are productive in their duties. When people like this understand the truth and act with principle, it really benefits the work of God’s house. Brother Chen had good caliber, so I should help him out of love more, and fellowship more to support him. Only that would be considerate to God’s will. This experience made me appreciate that treating people by our satanic corrupt dispositions without the truth can only harm brothers and sisters, and delay both their life entry and the church’s work. That is a transgression; it’s doing evil. I saw how important it is to treat others

according to the principles of the truth. I've gained this small understanding thanks to the guidance of God's words.

20. Practicing the Truth Is the Key to Harmonious Coordination

By Dongfeng, USA

In August 2018, my duty was to make movie props with Brother Wang. At first, I felt there was so much I didn't know so I asked Brother Wang for help all the time. After a bit, I got a grasp on the job. Also, I'd studied interior design and I'd worked in construction and had some carpentry experience so I could make props on my own before long. Then I realized that Brother Wang was good at designing interior sets but making the actual props wasn't his forte. So when we had different trains of thought in that regard, I didn't want to listen to him. I always thought I was better at making props and my plans were better than his. Over time, we butted heads more and more and sometimes we'd bicker for ages over what to do with a little block of wood. I'd often just give in for the sake of our relationship, but I always felt like I was right. After a while I felt really miserable and didn't want to work with him at all.

One time we needed to make a thatched-roof house for a video but we didn't have any durable wood for the posts, so we had to make them ourselves. We talked over our ideas for this. I said we should make a mold for the posts first, then pour concrete into that so they'd be sturdier. But Brother Wang said the columns would be too smooth and not realistic enough, and that if we used some scrap cloth, we could imitate the texture and shape of a tree trunk. I thought, "I've worked in construction, but I've never seen cloth used on a cement post. No matter what it looks like, its thickness will be hard to control and it won't be very sturdy." So I shot down his idea, but he said he still wanted to try it. I was resistant when I saw he wasn't accepting my suggestion. I thought, "Why won't you just

listen to me? It doesn't matter—I'm right anyway. The results will speak for themselves. If it fails when it comes down to it, don't say I didn't warn you." We couldn't reach agreement, so we both went off and did our own thing. I worked for an afternoon and had a post made. I was wondering what Brother Wang's post looked like, and if our posts would go together since we'd each done our own thing. I felt a little uneasy at this thought so I went to see his. When I got there, I saw his post really wasn't any good. At the time I thought, "I told you that wouldn't work but you wouldn't listen to me, and now it's clear that my idea was better than yours." Then I said to Brother Wang, "Brother Wang, this post is kind of thick. The thatched house we're making isn't big, so will this fit? There are also a lot of cracks in it, it doesn't look very sturdy. The posts we've each made look so different. How can we use these for filming? Don't keep doing it this way. Shouldn't we just go by my idea?" I was surprised to hear him say, "My post is a little thick, but it's not really an issue. Your cement post doesn't look like a tree trunk. It'll need more work later." When I saw he not only wasn't receptive, but said I hadn't done a good job, I felt really uncomfortable. I thought, "How can you be so hard to talk to? You're impossible to work with!" I sat down at the computer after dinner and thought back over the day. I felt a little upset. I thought that Brother Wang was clearly in the wrong and he was always going head-to-head with me. I really didn't want to work with him anymore. But then I figured I was avoiding the issue, that I hadn't submitted. I felt more and more conflicted and upset, so I came before God in prayer, asking God to guide me to know myself so I could work well with Brother Wang.

I went to the Church website after that and read some words of God about service in coordination. God says: **"These days, many people do not pay attention to what lessons should be learned while coordinating with**

others. I have discovered that many of you cannot learn lessons at all while coordinating with others; most of you stick to your own views. When working in the church, you say your piece and someone else says theirs, and the one has no relation to the other; you do not actually cooperate at all. You are all so absorbed in merely communicating your own insights or in releasing the ‘burdens’ you bear inside you, without seeking life in even the smallest way. You appear to only be doing the work perfunctorily, always believing that you should walk your own path regardless of what anyone else says or does; you think you should fellowship as the Holy Spirit guides you, no matter what the circumstances of others may be. You are not able to discover the strengths of others, and nor are you capable of examining yourselves. Your acceptance of things is really deviant and erroneous. It can be said that even now you still exhibit a lot of self-righteousness, as if you have relapsed into that old illness” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Serve As the Israelites Did). “Cooperation among brothers and sisters is itself a process of offsetting one’s weaknesses with another’s strengths. You use your strengths to compensate for others’ shortcomings, and others use their strengths to make up for yours. This is what it means to offset one’s weaknesses with others’ strengths, and to cooperate in harmony. Only when cooperating in harmony can people be blessed before God, and, the more of this one experiences, the more practicality they possess, the path becomes ever brighter, and they become ever more at ease. If you are always at loggerheads with others, and always unconvinced by others, who never wish to listen to you; if you try to preserve the dignity of others, yet they do not do the same for you, which you feel to be unbearable; if you back them into a corner over something they have said, and they remember it, and, the next time an

issue arises, they do the same to you—can what you are doing be called offsetting each other’s weaknesses with your strengths and cooperating in harmony? It is called strife, and living by your hot blood and corrupt dispositions. It will not gain God’s blessing; it does not please Him” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. On Harmonious Coordination). These words of God showed me that Brother Wang and I weren’t getting along because I was living within my arrogant and self-righteous disposition. I always wanted to have the final say in our duty. I always thought making props was a particular strong point for me, more so than Brother Wang, so I was always condescending and wanted him to listen to me, to do what I said. When he made a suggestion for the posts, I didn’t look into it, but rejected it outright. I even looked down on him and was dismissive. I thought he didn’t have any expertise, so his suggestions weren’t worth considering. When I saw his post was no good, I thought I was right, so I subtly disparaged his work and wanted him to go along with me. When he pointed out the shortcomings in my plan, I didn’t accept it or even try to find a solution with him. I was resistant and didn’t even want to work with him anymore. I was only speaking and acting to prove myself, to have him go along with me. That was entirely the satanic disposition of arrogance and self-righteousness. These words of God are particularly fitting: **“Can what you are doing be called offsetting each other’s weaknesses with your strengths and cooperating in harmony? It is called strife, and living by your hot blood and corrupt dispositions. It will not gain God’s blessing; it does not please Him”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. On Harmonious Coordination). I could feel from His words that God is disgusted by people like that. God arranged for me to work with Brother Wang, hoping we could make up for the other’s shortcomings and do our duty well. But I just spoke and acted out of

arrogance, always thinking I was right and should have the final say. I wanted others to follow my ideas as if they were the truth without accepting anyone else's ideas. God detests that kind of disposition. I was filled with regret and guilt as I thought it over, so I came before God with this prayer: "Oh God, I haven't been able to work well with others because of my arrogance and this has impacted my duty. God, I wish to repent. I want to put myself aside and work with my brother to do our duty well."

I read another passage of God's words after that. **"At times, when cooperating to fulfill a duty, two people have a dispute over a matter of principle. They have different viewpoints and they have come to different opinions. What can be done in that case? Is this an issue that occurs frequently? It is a normal phenomenon, caused by differences in people's minds, calibers, insights, ages, and experiences. It is impossible for two people's heads to have precisely the same contents, so that two people might come to differ in their opinions and views is a very common phenomenon and a most regular occurrence. Do not tie yourself in knots about it. The critical question is how, when such an issue arises, you should cooperate and seek to achieve unity before God and unanimity of opinion. What is the goal of having a unanimous opinion? It is to seek the truth principles in this regard, and not to act according to your own or someone else's intentions, but together to seek the intentions of God. This is the path to achieving harmonious cooperation. Only when you seek God's intentions and the principles He requires will you be able to achieve unity"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. On Harmonious Coordination). After reading God's words I saw that to reach accord in our cooperation, we can't just follow one person's ideas, but we have to strive for the principles of the truth. Truly harmonious cooperation means seeking the truth and working according to

principle. Since Brother Wang and I had different experiences, knowledge, and technical skills, it was normal to have different perspectives in our work. I had to learn to put myself aside and seek the principles alongside him. We had to submit to the truth and uphold the work of God's house so that we could gain the Holy Spirit's guidance in our duty. Realizing this, I planned to open up to Brother Wang in fellowship the next day so we could figure out how to make that prop together. I was surprised when he came to seek me out the next morning and said he had been too obstinate and that his plan was no good. He had even broken down the post he'd made and was ready to go with my idea. I felt ashamed when I heard him say this. I opened up to Brother Wang as well about my own state and my understanding and when we both let go of our egos, the barrier between us disappeared. I saw my own inadequacies in my duty after that. The post I'd made really was too smooth and it didn't look like a real tree trunk. It needed one more round of changes. I went to discuss it with Brother Wang and we found a solution really quickly. We each made up for the other's weaknesses and then finished three posts in one day. Before, we'd spent most of a day to make only two posts, and neither one was right. This was much more efficient. I realized how important it is to practice the truth and cooperate with brothers and sisters in my duty. But I was so arrogant and self-righteous that before long, I had other problems working with others.

Once, I was working with Brother Li to set up a tent to shelter brothers and sisters from the rain on location. I suggested an approach in our discussion that he really liked. At that moment I thought, "I've worked in construction before, so I definitely understand this better than you." But then right after that, he mentioned a concern. He said, "We only have 16 metal posts now. Do we have enough for this plan? Would it be sound? Would it be safe?" I thought, "This is a triangular structure. Haven't you

learned about the stability of triangular structures? It'll be really sound, no problem." So I responded dismissively, "There's no 100% guarantee there won't be a problem, but as long as we don't have a category 10 hurricane, it'll be fine." Then he wanted me to sketch out a blueprint and explain the details and I lost my patience, saying, "No need. The sketch is in my head and I'll make sure it's done right." Nothing more was said. The next afternoon when we started building the tent, another brother suggested that we put two metal posts up first to secure the roof, then erect the sides. When I heard this I thought, "That will definitely take more time. I've thought this over many times and my way has to be the best approach. You're new here and you weren't involved in the discussion. My plan is definitely better." So I said to him, "That would be too slow. Those two posts would have to be taken down later, so building it from the back will be faster." He didn't say anything more when he saw I had no intention of accepting his idea, so I started to build the tent based on my own plan. When I got to the top of the ladder, I saw the clasp on a metal post suddenly came loose and the post fell. Luckily it just fell on the grass, not on a person or anything. My heart skipped a beat. "What happened?" I wondered. "I definitely tightened it, so how could it just fall? Someone probably didn't hold it up straight so the clasp couldn't tighten properly." My thinking was that simplistic and I didn't take it to heart. I just kept building it by my own plan. Just then, the post that had been put up fell toward me right onto the ladder I was standing on. I fell more than six feet down off the ladder. It's lucky I wasn't injured. Then I realized that these two mishaps weren't random. If it hadn't been for God's care and protection, the consequences of being hurt by any of those posts would've been terrible. I felt guiltier and more afraid as I thought about it and I quickly came before God in prayer. "Oh God, things have been going wrong today. I know Your good will is

behind it and there's a lesson for me to learn, but I don't know what I should seek. Please guide and enlighten me to know Your will." I thought of God's words after praying: **"Whenever you do anything, it always goes awry, or you hit a wall. This is God's discipline. Sometimes, when you do something that is disobedient and rebellious toward God, nobody else may know of it—but God does. He will not let you off, and He will discipline you"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Those Who Are to Be Made Perfect Must Undergo Refinement). These words kept circling in my mind: **"Nobody else may know of it—but God does. He will not let you off, and He will discipline you."** Then I realized how dismissive I'd been toward my brothers about building the tent. I hadn't listened to their suggestions at all, but just rejected them right off the bat. I thought I was right so we should do what I wanted. Wasn't that so arrogant of me? It was already precarious when it was being built. If it collapsed with the actors under it, the consequences would be unthinkable. At that thought, I prayed to God to turn myself around. Then I thought of something the Lord Jesus said: **"If two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father which is in heaven"** (Matthew 18:19). God's words woke me up right away—I knew I couldn't keep on doing things that way but I had to discuss things and cooperate with my brothers. Then I had another thought: Safety first. Most important was constructing the tent well with the materials we had. Just then, the brothers said that based on my original plan we didn't have enough metal posts for a sturdy construction, but if we erected two in the middle, the roof ridge would be secure. I was in complete agreement with them. My original plan really would have created a lot of safety hazards. So we talked it out and in no time we had a complete plan. What's more, we had just enough metal posts and we finished it right before dark.

That evening, I thought back over the day. My arrogance had almost brought about disaster and I couldn't settle my feelings. I rushed to pray to God, asking Him to guide me to know myself. I got my phone and went to the Church's website, where I read these words of God. Almighty God says, **"Some people never seek the truth while performing their duty. They merely do as they please, stubbornly acting according to their own imaginings, and are ever arbitrary and rash. What does it mean to be 'arbitrary and rash'? It means, when you encounter an issue, to act however you see fit, with no thought process, heedless of what anyone else says. No one can get through to you, and no one can change your mind, such that you cannot be swayed in the slightest; you stand your ground, and, even when what others say makes sense, you do not listen, and believe your way to be the right one. Even if it is, should you not pay heed to others' suggestions? Yet you do not take heed. Other people call you stubborn. How stubborn? So stubborn that ten oxen could not pull you back—dead stubborn, arrogant and willful in the extreme, the sort that does not see the truth until it is staring you in the face. Does such stubbornness not rise to the level of willfulness? You do whatever you want, whatever you think to do, and you listen to no one. Were someone to tell you something you are doing does not accord with the truth, you would say, 'I'll do it whether it accords with the truth or not. If it doesn't accord with the truth, I'll give you such-and-such a reason, or so-and-so a justification. I'll make you hear me. I'm set on this.' Others may say what you are doing is disruptive, that it will lead to serious consequences, that it is detrimental to the interests of God's house—yet you do not heed them, but offer yet more of your reasoning: 'This is what I'm doing, whether you like it or not. I want to do it this way. You're completely wrong, and I'm completely justified.' Perhaps**

you are indeed justified, and what you are doing will have no serious consequences—but what disposition is it that you are revealing? (Arrogance.) An arrogant nature makes you willful. When people have this willful disposition, are they not prone to being arbitrary and rash?” (God’s Fellowship). **“Arrogance is the root of man’s corrupt disposition. The more arrogant people are, the more liable they are to resist God. How serious is this problem? Not only do people with arrogant dispositions consider everyone else beneath them, but, worst of all, they are even condescending toward God. Even though, externally, some people might appear to believe in God and follow Him, they do not treat Him as God at all. They always feel that they possess the truth and think the world of themselves. This is the essence and root of the arrogant disposition, and it comes from Satan. Therefore, the problem of arrogance must be resolved. Feeling that one is better than others—that is a trivial matter. The critical issue is that one’s arrogant disposition prevents one from submitting to God, His rule, and His arrangements; such a person always feels inclined to compete with God for power over others. This sort of person does not revere God in the slightest, to say nothing of loving God or submitting to Him”** (God’s Fellowship). God’s words made me see my own ugliness. I was just as willful and unreasonable as God’s words reveal. In building that tent, I’d clung to my own experience and acted stubbornly yet again. I wouldn’t listen to the other brothers’ suggestions, but just rejected them right away. They warned me to make sure it was safe, that the roof ridge was secure, but I ignored them. I wanted to have the final say and have everyone do what I wanted. I saw my arrogant nature was the root of my dismissiveness and willfulness. Being arrogant and doing things my own way had impacted my duty before. But that time, when I wouldn’t even listen to a reasonable

suggestion but rigidly stuck to my own idea, I had almost caused an accident. I'd been autocratic and willful in my arrogance. I wasn't working well with others and God had no place in my heart. I didn't even care about the work of God's house or others' safety. I was just determined to do my own thing. I had lost all reason in my arrogance. If it hadn't been for God's care and protection, I can't even imagine the consequences. I finally realized how dangerous it was to do things that way. Not only would I have held up our duty, but someday there could have been a terrible accident, and it would've been too late for regret! This thought left me really afraid. I gained some understanding of my arrogant nature and didn't want to do my duty that way anymore.

After that, I found a path of practice in God's words. **“Do not put on airs. Can you alone take up the work, even if you are the most professionally skilled or you feel your quality is the greatest of those here? Can you alone take up the work even if you have the highest status? You cannot, not without everyone's help. Therefore, none should be arrogant and none should wish to act unilaterally; one must swallow one's pride, let go of one's own thoughts and views, and work in harmony with the assembly. These are the people who practice the truth and are possessed of humanity. Such people are loved by God, and only they can be devoted in the performance of their duty. This alone is a manifestation of devotion”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The Proper Fulfillment of Duty Requires Harmonious Cooperation). God's words showed me the principles for cooperation. No matter what someone's caliber or gifts, we all have inadequacies and weaknesses. No one person can do everything. We have to learn to put ourselves aside and work well with others so everyone can make use of what God has given them and we can strive for the same goal to do our duties well. Thinking back on my

duty, some brothers and sisters had strengths I didn't possess. After they gave me some pointers and help, I'd do better the second time around. Sometimes they had ideas I hadn't considered and taking their suggestions avoided some potential problems. Thinking through this left me abashed. I hadn't known myself before. I'd just been blindly arrogant, but now I learned that I needed other people's cooperation and help, otherwise I couldn't do my duty well. My experience showed me that when I acted out of arrogance and didn't cooperate with others, I always ran into walls. When I was willing to repent, let go of myself, and work with others, I had the guidance and blessings of God. I could see that God likes those with humanity who practice the truth. This was really enlightening for me and I found a path of practice.

On the third morning, a brother asked me to reinforce the tent a bit. I thought, "It's going to be taken down after filming this afternoon. Is that necessary?" But then I thought of this in God's words: **"None should be arrogant and none should wish to act unilaterally; one must swallow one's pride, let go of one's own thoughts and views, and work in harmony with the assembly. These are the people who practice the truth."** God's words gave me a path of practice. I had to let go of my own views to cooperate with Brother Li, and whether he was right or not, I had to submit and seek first. Then I realized there were still five or six hours of filming left and there was no telling how the weather might change. Reinforcing it would be safer. So a brother and I reinforced the tent. Then around 2 or 3 that afternoon, it suddenly got really windy and rainy and the storm lasted about 40 minutes. We safely waited out the storm inside the tent. This moved me in a way I can't express. I saw how almighty and wise God is. Not only had others' suggestions helped me recognize my own

corrupt disposition, but God had reminded me in this wondrous way and protected us through the storm. I thank God from the bottom of my heart!

These experiences gave me an understanding of my arrogant satanic nature and some entry into harmonious cooperation. I saw that practicing the truth and not being stubborn in my duty was really important for working well with others. What I've understood and gained has been entirely because of the judgment and revelation of God's words, as well as His chastening and discipline. Thanks be to Almighty God!

21. I Finally Understand What It Means to Fulfill My Duty

By Xunqiu, South Korea

Almighty God says, **“Man’s performance of his duty is, in actuality, the accomplishment of all that is inherent within man, which is to say, that which is possible for man. It is then that his duty is fulfilled. The defects of man during his service are gradually reduced through progressive experience and the process of his undergoing judgment; they do not hinder or affect man’s duty. Those who cease to serve or yield and fall back for fear that there may be drawbacks to their service are the most cowardly of all. If people cannot express what they ought to express during service or achieve what is inherently possible for them, and instead fool about and go through the motions, they have lost the function that a created being should have. Such people are what are known as ‘mediocrities’; they are useless refuse. How can such people properly be called created beings? Are they not corrupt beings that shine on the outside but are rotten within?”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Difference Between the Ministry of God Incarnate and the Duty of Man). God’s words have helped me understand what doing our duty really means. It means that no matter how talented or gifted we are, we have to fully put into play everything we understand. We can’t cut corners or just go through the motions. We have to keep striving based on what God requires. That way, we can make up for any weaknesses or deficiencies in the performance of our duties and we’ll get better and better results.

Recently, the church wanted to film some videos of solo hymns of God’s words. Our team leader wanted me to sing lead vocals and play the guitar for one of the songs. When he told me about this, I was a little

nervous. Singing and playing the guitar is harder than just singing. Plus, I'd tried doing a solo like that before, but while singing I focused on my performance and missed my chords, but when I focused on the chords, my expressions were off. In the end, they couldn't use the footage. Faced with the same task, I wanted to say no, but I didn't think that would be in line with God's will. My brothers and sisters all thought I was well-suited for the song, so I figured I should go along with it and do my duty. So, I accepted the role. After two days of practice, I'd grasped the singing and performance parts pretty well. But the guitar chords were quite complicated and hard to remember. With just one day to go before filming, I was becoming really anxious. I was afraid that even if I kept practicing, it would be too late to change anything, and if I did keep practicing, wouldn't my hands swell up? Regardless of discomfort, I might not even remember it. At that thought, I didn't want to pay the price for it, so I kept trying to think of the perfect solution to this difficult problem. That's when I had an idea: I could ask the cameraman not to film my hands too much, then I wouldn't need to work so hard on these annoying chords. And we could still film the video. It seemed like a good idea. I was actually a little uneasy when I had this idea. It felt like I was being irresponsible. What if there was a problem with the chords, and we had to reshoot the video? But then I thought to myself: "Time is so tight and it's such a hard song. It'll be so taxing and stressful to play the song well. I can't perform above my level. Besides, this is so we can get the video out as soon as possible. Everyone should understand." After that, I focused on my singing and performance, without worrying too much about the chords. I figured it should be good enough.

When it was time to film, I asked the brother filming not to do many close-ups of my hands. I didn't think there would be any problem. But the next day, the director said I was playing some of the chords wrong and

asked me what was going on. I felt so guilty and my face turned bright red. I thought, “Oh no, will we have to reshoot?” I rushed to ask the editor if there was another solution. He just shook his head and said, “I tried, it’s no good.” At this, I knew we’d have to refilm. I felt bad knowing that I had caused the problem. Later, when we got together to discuss what had happened, I told everyone my reasons for doing what I’d done. A sister reproached me, saying, “Why didn’t you tell us you hadn’t learned the chords? Now we have to film all over again and the whole project’s delayed. This was careless and irresponsible of you!” I just couldn’t accept what she said. I thought, “Didn’t I do my best? The fact is that I can’t play the chords, and I did it to make sure the video was finished quickly. They just shouldn’t have filmed my hands, right?” I just made excuses, without any self-reflection. But then another sister told me, “If you were having trouble, you could have practiced more, even if the filming was postponed for a few days. But you can’t just muddle through like that. You’re the lead singer—how will it look if we don’t show you playing the guitar? This was so irresponsible and careless of you!” Hearing her say “so” like that really got to me. I couldn’t help but think, “If my brothers and sisters all think I’m careless in my duties, maybe I really am in the wrong? I wanted the filming to go well, too. But the project is delayed and we have to refilm because my chords were wrong. I am definitely to blame.” I felt bad at that thought. I stopped protesting and started reflecting.

I later found a passage of God’s word that really moved me. This is what it said: **“What is the result of performing your duty carelessly and perfunctorily, and treating it lightly? It is the poor performance of your duty, though you are capable of performing it well—your performance will not be up to standard, and God will not be satisfied with your attitude toward your duty. If, originally, you had sought and**

cooperated normally; if you had devoted all your thoughts to it; if you had put your heart and soul into doing it, and put all your effort into it, and had devoted a period of your labor, your striving, and your thoughts to it, or had devoted some time to referencing materials, and committed the whole of your mind and body to it; had you been capable of such cooperation, then God would be up ahead, guiding you. You do not need to exert much strength; when you spare no effort in cooperating, God will have already arranged everything for you. If you are wily and treacherous, and, halfway through the job, you have a change of heart and go astray, then God will show no interest in you; you will have lost this opportunity, and God will say, ‘You are not good enough; you are useless. Go stand off to the side. You like being lazy, no? You like being deceitful and cunning, do you not? You like resting? Well then, take a rest.’ God will give this grace and opportunity to the next person. What do you say: Is this a loss or a win? It is an enormous loss!” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. How to Solve the Problem of

Being Careless and Perfunctory When Performing Your Duty). God’s words revealed my own state. I’d agreed to practice to take on the lead role, but I didn’t actually do what I’d promised. I didn’t address my weaknesses or look for information to improve my chords. I slacked off in practice because I thought it would be too hard. I made the excuse that I didn’t have the time and asked the cameraman to avoid doing close-ups on my hands. I thought I could get away with it, but it ended up delaying the project. It really was irresponsible and careless of me! When my duty presented itself, I didn’t want to make the effort to play the song well and bear witness for God. Instead, I took the path of least resistance, and now we had to redo everything. How could I have been so irresponsible? Just a little more practice, a little more effort, and I wouldn’t have harmed the work of God’s

house. I hated myself a bit at that point. I thought, “If I get another chance, I won’t be so perfunctory again. Even if I have to exhaust myself practicing those chords, I’ll do what needs to be done.”

The others decided to give me another two days to practice. This was really moving for me and I thanked God for giving me a chance to make up for my transgression. In my practice after that I worked hard to memorize all the chords, but I felt really stressed. I was afraid my technique still wasn’t up to scratch and that two days wouldn’t be enough time for me to improve. I started getting anxious again. But the more anxious I got, the more I forgot, and the more I forgot, the more anxious I got. That morning went by in a flash. I still couldn’t play the song very well, and my hands were sore. I usually took a break from practicing after lunch, but this time, I knew I had to keep going. I knew that I couldn’t afford to take a break, but had to use every moment I had to get the chords right. Once I set my heart right, God guided me. That afternoon, without realizing it, I figured out how to memorize the chords in sections! It got better and better. But I’d been practicing for so long that my hands started to swell up and I was tempted to slack off again. When I caught myself thinking this way again, I thought of something God had said, and I rushed to read it: **“When faced with a duty that needs your effort and expenditure, and that requires you to dedicate your body, mind, and time, you must not hold anything back, harbor any petty cleverness, or leave any leeway. If you leave any leeway, are calculating, or are wily and treacherous, then you are bound to do a poor job. You might say, ‘No one saw me acting in a slick way. How cool!’ What kind of thinking is this? You think you have pulled the wool over people’s eyes, and over God’s, too. In actual fact, though, does God know what you have done or not? (He knows.) Generally, people who interact with you over a long period of time will**

find out, too, and will say that you are a person who is always slippery, is never diligent, and only puts in fifty or sixty percent of his effort, or eighty at the most. They will say you do everything in a very confused manner, turning a blind eye to whatever you are doing; you are not at all conscientious in your work. If you are made to do something, only then do you put in a bit of effort; if someone is around to check to see if your work is up to par, then you do a slightly better job—but if no one is around to check, you slack off a bit. If you are dealt with, then you put your heart into it; otherwise, you are constantly dozing through work and trying to get away with whatever you can, assuming that no one will notice. Time goes by, and people notice. They say, ‘This person is unreliable and untrustworthy; if you give him an important duty to perform, he’ll need supervision. He can do ordinary tasks and jobs that do not involve principles, but if you give him any vital duty to fulfill, he’ll most likely just mess it up, and then you will have been hoodwinked.’ People will see right through him, and he will have completely discarded all dignity and integrity. If no one can trust him, then how can God? Would God entrust him with any major tasks? Such a person is untrustworthy” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Life Entry Must Begin With the Experience of Performing One’s Duty).

God’s words made me realize just how perfunctory I was being in my duty. I was complacent in practicing the chords, and I wasn’t reaching for the highest standard. I wasn’t exerting myself fully. I was skating by and muddling through my duty. I had no integrity. I wasn’t trustworthy. I’d always thought of myself as passionate and hard-working in my duties, that I had undying loyalty. But now, I saw that I hadn’t been focused on the results, but had just muddled through. How was that doing my duty? If I carried on that way, who would dare to trust me again? Wouldn’t I lose my

integrity and my honor? I'd committed a transgression last time. I didn't want to repeat it. It didn't matter if my hands swelled up or if I was tired, my integrity and dignity mattered more. So, I resolved to keep practicing the chords, no matter how tiring or difficult. Once I'd resolved to truly repent, I saw God's blessings and guidance. That very day, I practiced until past midnight, and managed to memorize almost all of the chords. I practiced the entire next day until I was familiar with the whole song. During filming, I intently focused on each step and I prayed silently, relying on God. To my surprise, we filmed the whole thing in one take! Seeing it turn out this way gave me a sense of peace. I tasted the sweetness of practicing the truth.

I was later given the duty of composing music. I hadn't composed a song for a long time, so I was a bit out of practice. In particular, we'd been doing rock songs recently, which I'd never done before, so I was a bit worried. But I knew this was a duty I needed to fulfill and I had to do my best. So, I made a plan to complete two songs by the end of the month. I worked overtime composing the songs, and when I was tired, I asked God to help me forsake the flesh. I came up with a melody and quickly turned it into a full song. When it was done, I had my brothers and sisters listen to it. They said it was okay and that it had the right style for rock music. But inside, I thought: "If I worked more and polished the chorus melody, the song would be even better." But I had second thoughts. I didn't have a clear direction at the time and I didn't want to ask too much of myself. Besides, my brothers and sisters didn't have a problem with it. It was good enough. Plus, I'd only just learned how to compose this kind of song, so it was normal for it to be flawed. I submitted it to the team leader.

A few days later, he told me that I was on the right track, but the melody was a little rough. He suggested I think about the lyrics a bit more. I

felt a bit resistant to this and I thought, “I’ve only just learned how to compose this kind of song. You’re asking too much of me!” I’d already spent a lot of time on it and a few more days waiting for his feedback. Half a month had already gone by. Seeing there was no progress, I was a little anxious. Revising the composition would really take a lot of effort and I didn’t know how it would turn out. So, I rewrote the tune. The team leader said it wasn’t good and sounded like a kids’ song. I felt really dejected. I thought, “I’m giving it my all but I haven’t gotten even one song approved. What should I do?” Later, I wrote a few more melodies, but none of them were accepted. I was so distraught. I thought about how I’d resolved to compose two songs by the end of the month, but I hadn’t even finished one. I’d failed in my duties. Was I good for nothing?

In a later gathering, the team leader reminded me, “Your compositions are quite original and the styles are good, so why hasn’t anything been approved yet? You’re not paying attention to the lyrics, so the words and the melody don’t fit. Every time you change it, it gets worse. This is holding up the work of God’s house.” Then, another brother chimed in: “You’re not singing well on the recordings. Some of them don’t even match the sheet music. You’re being careless!” Being dealt with and reprimanded by the brothers was humiliating. I wanted to crawl into a hole. When I got home, I prayed to God: “God, I’ve been perfunctory in my duty. I haven’t been devoted, but I don’t know how to resolve this problem. Please help me and guide me.”

Later, I read this in God’s words: **“Is it not something within a corrupt disposition to handle things so flippantly and irresponsibly? What thing? It is scumminess; in all matters, they say ‘that’s about right’ and ‘close enough’; it is an attitude of ‘maybe,’ ‘possibly,’ and ‘four-out-of-five’; they do things perfunctorily, are satisfied to do the**

minimum, and are satisfied to muddle along as they can; they see no point in taking things seriously or striving for precision, and they see less point in seeking principles. Is this not something within a corrupt disposition? Is it a manifestation of normal humanity? To call it arrogance is right, and to call it dissolute is also entirely apt—but to capture it perfectly, the only word that will do is ‘scummy.’ Such scumminess is present in the humanity of a majority of people; in all matters, they wish to do the least possible, to see what they can get away with, and there is a whiff of deceit in everything they do. They cheat others when they can, cut corners when they are able, and are loath to spend much time or thought considering a matter. So long as they can avoid being revealed, and they cause no problems, and they are not called to account, they think all is well, and thus they muddle forward. To them, doing a job well is more trouble than it is worth. Such people learn nothing to mastery, and they do not apply themselves in their studies. They want only to get the broad outline of a subject and then call themselves proficient at it, and then rely on this to muddle their way through. Is this not an attitude people have toward things? Is it a good attitude? This sort of attitude that such people adopt toward people, events, and things is, in a few words, ‘to muddle through,’ and such scumminess exists in all of corrupt mankind” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. For Leaders and Workers, Choosing a Path Is of Utmost Importance (9)). “How can one tell the difference between noble and base people? Simply look at their attitude and manner in their treatment of people, events, and things—look at how they act, how they handle things, and how they behave when issues arise. People with character and dignity are meticulous, serious and diligent in their actions, and they are willing to make sacrifices. People without character and

dignity are desultory and slipshod in their actions, always up to some trick, always wanting to just muddle through. They learn no skill to mastery, and, no matter how long they study, they remain confounded by ignorance in matters of skill or profession. If you do not press them for answers, all seems fine, but, as soon as you do, they panic—sweat drenches their brows, and they have no response. Those are people of low character” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. For Leaders and

Workers, Choosing a Path Is of Utmost Importance (9)). Only when I read this did I realize that I'd been careless in my duty, because there was something scummy within me. I wanted to do the least possible in everything, with no concern for the quality of my work. I didn't want to seek the principles of the truth and do my duty as God demands. When I think about this time, whether it was filming a video or composing a song, whenever I faced a problem that required effort, whenever I needed to pay a price, I would only put in minimal efforts. I didn't try to improve or work harder. In fact, I knew that if I worked harder and more attentively, I'd do better in my duties. But I only ever did the bare minimum, always indulging myself. So I couldn't advance in my work or bear witness for God through my duty, and I kept holding up the church's work as a result. How could I say I'd done my duty? I was clearly impeding the work of God's house. That's when I saw just how serious my scumminess was. I muddled through, I drifted along, I tried to fool God. I was lacking character and dignity. God likes those who do their duty honestly and diligently, who seek the principles of the truth in the face of difficulties and fulfill their duty as God requires. They have honor and integrity, and are valued in God's eyes. Compared to them, I was unfit to be called human. I felt ashamed. At that moment, I understood: God was saving me through my brothers pruning and dealing with me. Otherwise, I'd always be muddling through this way. I would

never do my duty well. I'd disrupt the work of God's house and be cast out by God.

I read more of God's words: **"The work of God is done for the sake of mankind, and the cooperation of man is given for the sake of God's management. After God has done all that He is supposed to do, man is required to be unstinting in his practice, and to cooperate with God. In the work of God, man should spare no effort, should offer up his loyalty, and should not indulge in numerous notions, or sit passively and await death. God can sacrifice Himself for man, so why can man not offer his loyalty to God? God is of one heart and mind toward man, so why can man not offer a little cooperation? God works for mankind, so why can man not perform some of his duty for the sake of God's management? God's work has come this far, yet still you see but do not act, you hear but do not move. Are not such people the objects of perdition? God has already devoted His all to man, so why, today, is man incapable of earnestly performing his duty? For God, His work is His first priority, and the work of His management is of the utmost importance. For man, putting God's words into practice and fulfilling God's requirements are his first priority. This you should all understand"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God's Work and Man's Practice).

I was so moved as I thought over God's words. God is of one heart and mind toward man. He has become flesh twice to save humanity, who's corrupted by Satan. He has been humiliated, rejected by generations, and has suffered so much. Faced with our deep corruption and our senseless apathy, God has never abandoned us. He still expresses the truth to save us. Our caliber is lacking and we're slow to accept the truth, but God fellowships with us so sincerely, and thoroughly. Sometimes He uses metaphors and examples, and tells stories to guide us from every angle, and

in every way. This is so we can understand the truth and enter into it. God takes responsibility for our lives and He won't rest until He has completed us. Seeing God's disposition and His earnest intentions was really inspiring. But when I thought of how I'd treated God and how I'd approached my duties, I was filled with regret. I didn't want to muddle through in my duty anymore. I went before God and prayed, asking Him how I could really stop being careless and do my duty well.

I then read God's words, which said: **“What is duty? It is a commission entrusted by God to people. So how should you fulfill your duty? By acting in accordance with God's requirements and standards, and by basing your behavior on the truth principles rather than on human subjective desires. In this way, your fulfilling of your duties will be up to standard”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only by Seeking the Truth Principles Can One Perform Their Duty Well). **“What does it mean to take it seriously? Taking it seriously does not mean putting in a little effort or suffering some physical torment. What is key is that there is God in your heart, and a burden. In your heart, you must weigh the importance of your duty, and then carry this burden and responsibility in all you do and put your heart into it. You must make yourself worthy of the mission God has given you, as well as everything God has done for you, and His hopes for you. Only doing so is being serious. There is no use in you going through the motions; you may trick people, but you cannot fool God. If there is no real price and no loyalty when you perform your duty, then it is not up to standard”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Performing Duty Well Requires a Conscience, at the Very Least). This brought me clarity within my heart. Our duty is entrusted to us by God. We must do as He demands and act according to the truth. We can't pick and choose or blindly follow our own desires. We have to meet a

certain standard in our duty—just appearing to work hard doesn't cut it. The main thing is to have a sense of responsibility, to be diligent and earnest, to seek, ponder, and find ways to improve. Then we can do our duty and please God. Later, when I was composing a song, I carefully analyzed the lyrics, and found a few songs that expressed similar feelings. I thought hard about how other people used melody to express this kind of feeling. After getting a grasp on the meaning of the lyrics, the mood, and the direction of the melody, I started composing. I asked for my brothers' and sisters' advice later on, revised the composition twice, and then it was ready. It only took a week to finish. Another composition I'd revised was also accepted. When I saw how little time it took to finish those compositions, I felt even more remorse and regret for trying to muddle through my duty before. I saw how badly I'd been corrupted by Satan, how serious my scumminess was, and how careless I was in my work. Thanks to God's arrangements, having my brothers and sisters deal with me, I can finally seek the truth to resolve my corrupt dispositions and perform my duty with devotion. Thanks be to God!

22. I've Finally Learned How to Fulfill My Duty

By Xincheng, Italy

Almighty God says, **“It is through the process of doing his duty that man is gradually changed, and it is through this process that he demonstrates his loyalty. As such, the more you are able to do your duty, the more truth you shall receive, and the more real your expression shall become. Those who merely go through the motions in doing their duty and do not seek the truth shall be eliminated in the end, for such people do not do their duty in the practice of truth, and do not practice truth in the fulfillment of their duty. They are those who remain unchanged and will be cursed. Not only are their expressions impure, but everything they express is wicked”** (The Word, Vol.

1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Difference Between the Ministry of God Incarnate and the Duty of Man). **“Putting your heart into your duty and being able to take responsibility require you to suffer and to pay a price—it is not enough simply to talk about it. If you do not put your heart into your duty, instead wanting always to exert physical effort, then your duty will certainly not be done well. You will simply go through the motions and nothing more, and you will not know how well you have done your duty. If you put your heart into it, you will gradually come to understand the truth; if you do not, then you will not. When you put your heart into performing your duty and pursuing the truth, you then become gradually able to understand God’s will, to discover your own corruption and deficiencies, and to master all your various states. If you do not use your heart to examine yourself, and focus only on making external efforts, then you will be unable to discover the different states that arise in your heart and all the reactions you have to**

different external environments; if you do not use your heart to examine yourself, then it will be hard for you to resolve the issues in your heart” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only by Being Honest Can One Live Out a True Human Likeness). God’s words show us that we have to be attentive, responsible and seek the truth to fulfill our duty. I used to be a person who was careless. I didn’t put much effort into anything. It was the same in the house of God. I wasn’t trying for the best results in my duty. Whenever I encountered something complex that required hard work, I was careless and irresponsible so I was always making mistakes in my duty. Later on I came to understand a little about my own corrupt disposition from God’s words and how to fulfill my duty to meet God’s will, then I could perform my duty responsibly and steadily.

My duty at the time was checking translations into Italian. I was diligent at first and willing to resolve any difficulties that came up. But as time went by, I was faced with a backlog of documents and began to get a bit uneasy, especially when I saw documents with notes in all sorts of colors and masses of periods, commas and other punctuation marks. Every single one had to be checked for formatting and placement. I got restless. I thought, “How much thought will I have to put into this? It’s too much effort.” Then I wouldn’t want to check them so diligently anymore, but would just look them over and make sure they were more or less correct. Sometimes I needed to quiet my mind and really think about whether the translation was accurate, but when I saw a complex sentence structure, I’d make these selfish calculations: “It takes so much effort to deliberate and research every word, and if I come up empty-handed, won’t that be a waste of energy? Forget it, I’ll leave it to someone else for them to take care of.” And just like that, I was carelessly going through the motions in my duty.

Over time, constant problems started cropping up. Other people were finding some capitalization and punctuation errors in documents I'd checked and some of them even had a few words missing from the translation. I felt really bad when I saw that. Someone else saw those little problems right away but I hadn't when they were right in front of me. And how could there be such glaring omissions? The more I thought about it, the worse I felt. One day after lunch I received a message that said there was a really basic mistake with the singular and plural in a document I'd checked. It felt like a knife through the heart. How could I have been so careless? How could I have overlooked such a basic error? I couldn't be sure whether or not other documents I'd checked had similar errors. My work was riddled with errors. What was I to do? In my suffering, I hurried to come before God and pray. I reflected on my state and my attitude toward my duty recently.

I read a passage of God's words: **"If you do not put your heart into your duty and are careless, just doing things in the easiest way you can, then what sort of mentality is this? It is one of just doing things in a perfunctory manner, with no loyalty toward your duty, no sense of responsibility, and no sense of mission. Every time you do your duty, you use only half your strength; you do it half-heartedly, do not put your heart into it, and just try to get it over and done with, without being conscientious in the least. You do it in such a relaxed manner that it is as though you are just playing around. Will this not lead to problems? In the end, people will say that you are someone who performs your duty poorly, and that you simply go through the motions. And what will God say to this? He will say that you are not trustworthy. If you have been entrusted with a job and, whether it is a job of primary responsibility or one of ordinary responsibility, if you do**

not put your heart into it or live up to your responsibility, and if you do not see it as a mission God has given you or a matter with which God has entrusted you, or take it on board as your own duty and obligation, then this is going to be a problem. ‘Not trustworthy’—these two words will define how you go about your duty, and God will say that your character is not up to par. If a matter is entrusted to you, yet this is the attitude you take toward it and this is how you handle it, then will you be commissioned with any further duties in the future? Can you be entrusted with anything important? Perhaps you could be, but it would depend on how you behaved. Deep down, however, God will always harbor some distrust toward you, as well as some dissatisfaction. This will be a problem, will it not?’” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The Path Comes From Often Pondering the Truth). God observes the hearts of men. Every one of His words struck at my fatal flaw. Then I realized that doing things the easy way in my duty is a perfunctory attitude. There’s no attentiveness in this; it’s just going through the motions and not taking responsibility at all. Thinking back on my performance, whenever something required time and effort, I’d adopt the quickest, least demanding, shortcut method to get it done. I’d do whatever was easiest, saved me the most hassle, or was the least tiring. When there were a lot of new words or difficult grammar points or sentence structures, I wouldn’t make a serious effort to look them up. I’d take the easy route of marking them and asking someone else. When I saw complex notes or needed to carefully check the punctuation, I’d just give them a cursory look and then overlook some problems. I was being careless and shirking my responsibility toward my duty and God’s commission. I only thought about avoiding fleshly suffering. Where was there even a small place for God in my heart?

I later read more of God's words that said: "For people with humanity, performing their duties just as well when no one is watching should be easy; this should be included in their share of responsibilities. For those without humanity and who are not dependable, performing their duties is a very taxing process. Others always have to worry over them, supervise them, and ask about their progress; otherwise, they will do damage every time you give them a job to do. In short, people always need to self-reflect when performing their duties: 'Have I adequately fulfilled this duty? Did I put my heart into it? Or did I just muddle through it?' If any of those things occurred, then that is no good; it is dangerous. In a narrow sense, it means such a person has no credibility, and that people cannot trust him. To put it in broader terms, if such a person always just goes through the motions when doing his duty, and if he is continuously perfunctory toward God, then he is in great danger! What are the consequences of being knowingly deceitful? In the short term, you will have a corrupt disposition, commit frequent transgressions without repenting, and not learn how to practice the truth, nor will you put it into practice. In the long term, as you continuously do those things, your outcome will disappear; that will land you in trouble. This is what is known as not making any major mistakes but constantly making minor ones. Ultimately, this will lead to irreparable consequences. That would be very serious!" (The Word,

Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Life Entry Must Begin With the Experience of Performing One's Duty). Seeing God laying bare the nature and consequences of my carelessness before me, I couldn't help but feel scared. Going through the motions in my duty is deceiving both others and God. This attitude is condemned by God. If I didn't repent, sooner or later I'd commit a serious transgression and be eliminated by God. When the church made

arrangements for my duty, I made a solemn vow to perform my duty properly, but when it actually required me to make an effort, I was mindful only of the flesh, fearing trouble and suffering. I was cursory and careless when I checked the documents, so I missed even the most obvious errors. Wasn't that cheating? These thoughts filled me with regret and self-blaming, so I prayed to God: "Almighty God! I haven't been responsible in my duty, but have been trying to fool You. This is disgusting to You. I've been so lacking in conscience. God, I want to repent. Please guide me, give me the will to endure hardship and the ability to forsake the flesh and fulfill my duty."

In every document after that, I'd check every word I saw that wasn't quite apt in multiple dictionaries. I'd ask brothers and sisters or a professional translator when I couldn't be sure until I was completely clear. For documents that were difficult and long, I wouldn't dare just go through the motions and muddle through them, but I'd carefully consider each sentence repeatedly and in detail, trying my best to increase the accuracy of the translation. When finalizing a document, I'd list all the details I needed to check and constantly remind myself that every step needed to be considered thoroughly. I'd check every detail when finalizing and try my best to reduce the number of errors at the final stage. After some time, I was clearly getting better results in my duty and my error rate went down also.

Another sister joined the team later who helped standardize the formatting of the finalized translations. She'd ask me from time to time, "Is this punctuation mark right? What's the deal with that punctuation?" When she asked a lot of questions, I'd get quite annoyed and think, "It's too much trouble explaining everything. Just go by the finalized document." So I just fobbed her off and said: "This is the finalized document. There aren't any problems with the punctuation. Punctuation in Italian and English are

basically the same. Most of it can be handled like English, but there are exceptions. You have to consider the meaning.” Then she asked me, “Our current reference books are the kinds professionals use. I don’t understand some parts. Do we have any document which gives a general guide to Italian punctuation?” I said we didn’t yet. After that I figured I should create a document that new members could refer to, but there were so many punctuation marks. That would mean checking the reference books and would be too much of a hassle. I put it off for the time being. I thought that would be the end of the matter, but when she handled the Italian punctuation like English like I told her in her formatting, she went ahead and deleted all the spaces before and after the dashes in a document over 150,000 words long. I was just stunned when I found out. In Italian, there must be a space before and after a dash to avoid mixing dashes up with hyphens, which is different from English. But I didn’t tell her about that. There was nothing for it. She had to go back through and correct each one. I felt so bad and regretful. I hated myself and thought, “Why didn’t I just put in a little effort in the first place to make a reference document? Why was I always thinking of the flesh and so afraid of hassle? She had to go through it again all because of my carelessness. It had to be verified again too. That took effort, and the main thing is that it delayed our work progress. Wasn’t that disrupting the work of God’s house?” Those feelings of indebtedness, self-blame and regret welled up again. I just wanted to slap myself across the face. I thought, “Why am I just making do again? What’s wrong with me?”

One time in my devotionals, I came upon a passage of God’s words: **“Is it not something within a corrupt disposition to handle things so flippantly and irresponsibly? What thing? It is scumminess; in all matters, they say ‘that’s about right’ and ‘close enough’; it is an**

attitude of ‘maybe,’ ‘possibly,’ and ‘four-out-of-five’; they do things perfunctorily, are satisfied to do the minimum, and are satisfied to muddle along as they can; they see no point in taking things seriously or striving for precision, and they see less point in seeking principles. Is this not something within a corrupt disposition? Is it a manifestation of normal humanity? To call it arrogance is right, and to call it dissolute is also entirely apt—but to capture it perfectly, the only word that will do is ‘scummy.’ Such scumminess is present in the humanity of a majority of people; in all matters, they wish to do the least possible, to see what they can get away with, and there is a whiff of deceit in everything they do. They cheat others when they can, cut corners when they are able, and are loath to spend much time or thought considering a matter. So long as they can avoid being revealed, and they cause no problems, and they are not called to account, they think all is well, and thus they muddle forward. To them, doing a job well is more trouble than it is worth. Such people learn nothing to mastery, and they do not apply themselves in their studies. They want only to get the broad outline of a subject and then call themselves proficient at it, and then rely on this to muddle their way through. Is this not an attitude people have toward things? Is it a good attitude? This sort of attitude that such people adopt toward people, events, and things is, in a few words, ‘to muddle through,’ and such scumminess exists in all of corrupt mankind” (The

Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. For Leaders and Workers, Choosing a Path Is of Utmost Importance (9)). God’s words incisively pointed out the root of my lack of effort in my duty: My scumminess was too serious, and I did everything with a perfunctory and deceitful attitude. When the sister asked me about the proper use of punctuation, I didn’t want the hassle. I didn’t take it seriously and didn’t want too many questions, so I just fobbed her off

by telling her to follow a simple rule. And when she asked me about the reference document, I could have made one for her, but when I thought about the cost in terms of my own suffering, I decided not to bother. I was worried about mistakes cropping up, but I still decided to cheat my way through it. It would have been great if I'd saved the effort and things had gone fine. Every time I did things without effort, I was relying on luck to muddle through. I was always looking to use the minimal amount of effort to get by. I wasn't making a real, honest effort to fulfill my duty by considering every single detail and doing my utmost to ensure there were no mistakes. It looked like I was working, and I was answering questions, but in reality, I was just fooling that sister and being sly. As a result, she trusted my answers and made some serious errors and exhausted herself on fruitless work. She even had to redo huge amounts of work, which slowed down overall work progress and brought losses to the work of the church. The principle behind my actions, to do the easiest, most hassle-free thing, was a principle of harming people. I was using petty tricks to save effort in the short term. I hadn't suffered physically, but my transgressions in my duty were nonstop and disrupted the work of God's house. I was harming others and myself! I was tasked with such an important job, but I took it lightly, and was perfunctory, irresponsible, deceitful, and careless, and dismissive of the consequences. I didn't have the slightest conscience. Only then did I see how serious my scumminess was, how lowly my integrity was, and how worthless I was.

Later on I watched a video of a reading of God's words. Almighty God says, **"If people cannot express what they ought to express during service or achieve what is inherently possible for them, and instead fool about and go through the motions, they have lost the function that a created being should have. Such people are what are known as**

‘mediocrities’; they are useless refuse. How can such people properly be called created beings? Are they not corrupt beings that shine on the outside but are rotten within? ... Who could your words and actions be worthy of? Could it be that such minuscule sacrifice of yours is worthy of all I have bestowed upon you? I have no other choice and have been wholeheartedly devoted to you, yet you harbor wicked intentions and are half-hearted toward Me. That is the extent of your duty, your only function. Is this not so? Do you not know that you have utterly failed to perform the duty of a created being? How can you be considered a created being? Is it not clear to you what it is you are expressing and living out? You have failed to fulfill your duty, but you seek to gain the tolerance and bountiful grace of God. Such grace has not been prepared for ones as worthless and base as you, but for those who ask for nothing and gladly sacrifice. People such as you, such mediocrities, are utterly unworthy of enjoying the grace of heaven. Only hardship and interminable punishment shall accompany your days! If you cannot be faithful to Me, your fate shall be one of suffering. If you cannot be accountable to My words and My work, your outcome will be one of punishment. All grace, blessings, and the wonderful life of the kingdom shall have nothing to do with you. This is the end you deserve to meet and a consequence of your own making!’ (The Word, Vol. 1. The

Appearance and Work of God. The Difference Between the Ministry of God Incarnate and the Duty of Man). God’s words say, **“I have no other choice and have been wholeheartedly devoted to you, yet you harbor wicked intentions and are half-hearted toward Me. That is the extent of your duty.”** These words pierced my heart. God gave me the chance to perform my duty, so I could seek and gain the truth through my duty, cast off my corrupt disposition and be saved by God. But instead of seeking the truth, I just

cared about the flesh, fobbing off and deceiving God. I thought of how God became flesh to save humankind, enduring enormous humiliation and pain, pursued and persecuted by the government, condemned and rejected by people, but He always expresses the truth and works to save people. Our caliber is lacking so we understand the truth slowly. Not only has God not forsaken us, but He fellowships with us seriously from every angle. He explains all truths in great detail. He tells stories, gives examples and uses metaphors to help us understand. Some truths are complex and touch on many things, so God breaks them down and gives us outlines. He patiently and systematically guides us to understand the truth bit by bit through fellowship. We can see that God takes great responsibility for our lives. But then how did I treat my own duty? I thought that putting in more thought and effort wasn't worth it. I wasn't being serious or responsible when reviewing documents. I'd take the path of least resistance without looking at the outcome or the consequences. I'd been taking God's commission lightly, just skating through. Where was my conscience? I deserved God's punishment. But God never gave up on saving me. He used His words to enlighten me and lead me, help me know myself and understand God's will. If I kept slacking off and going through the motions in my duty, I wouldn't deserve to live or be called human. So I prayed to God: "Almighty God! My scumminess is too serious. I'm not willing to carry on living in this shameful and undignified way. Please give me the strength to practice the truth so that I can live out a true human likeness and fulfill the duty of a created being."

Later, I read God's words: **"As a human, to accept God's commission, one must be devoted. One must be completely devoted to God, and cannot be half-hearted, fail to take responsibility, or act based on one's own interests or moods; this is not being devoted. What**

does being devoted refer to? It means that while fulfilling your duties, you are not influenced and constrained by moods, environments, people, matters, or things. ‘I have received this commission from God; He has given it to me. This is what I’m supposed to do. I will therefore do it regarding it as my own affair, in whichever way yields good results, with importance laid on satisfying God.’ When you have this state, you are not only being controlled by your conscience, but devotedness is also involved. If you are only satisfied with getting it done, without aspiring to be efficient and achieve results, and feel that it is enough simply to put forth some effort, then this is merely the standard of conscience, and cannot be counted as devotion. When you are devoted to God, this standard is a bit higher than the standard of conscience. This, then, is no longer just a matter of putting forth some effort; you also must put your entire heart into it. You must always regard your duty as your own job to do, take burdens for this task, suffer reproach if you make the slightest mistake or if you are slipshod in the slightest, feel that you cannot be this kind of person, because it makes you so indebted to God. People who genuinely have sense fulfill their duties as though they are their own jobs to do, regardless of whether anyone is supervising. Whether God is happy with them or not and no matter how He treats them, they always have strict demands of themselves to fulfill their duties and complete the commission with which God has entrusted them. This is called devotion” (The Word, Vol. 3.

The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. People Can Only Truly Be Happy by Being Honest). God’s words showed me a path of practice. We can’t go by our mood and preferences in our duty, doing whatever we want. We can’t just muddle through when something requires hard work, but we should treat our duty as God’s commission, as our own responsibility. We should put in thought

and effort for the best results. However difficult, whether we're being supervised or not, we should always carry out our duty with all our heart, mind and strength. When I recognized this, I prayed to God, willing to repent and practice according to God's words. Afterward, I made the time to create a document on punctuation use in Italian for new members to refer to. After that I summarized common problems encountered in translations and listed out everything that required attention. I would check this during document review so nothing would be missed. And when a brother or sister asked me a question on their duty, I wouldn't just take a cursory look and use my imagination to answer, but carefully consider their question, apply the principles and look for professional knowledge I could use to answer them. When I didn't understand something, through actual effort coupled with enlightenment and guidance from God, I'd gradually understand it. I also reflected a lot on my incorrect motives in my duty. Whenever I encountered difficulties and wanted to just skate through, I would pray to God to forsake the flesh so I could resolve those issues with the true amount of effort needed. Gradually, my attitude in my duty was corrected significantly and I was muddling through things less. I became able to perform my duty in a steady manner. This change in me was entirely the result of God's judgment and chastisement. Thanks be to God!

23. Giving My Heart to God

By Xinchu, South Korea

In June 2018, I joined rehearsals for the Kingdom Anthem choral performance. Thinking I'd get up on stage and sing the hymn to praise and bear witness to God, I was so honored and proud. I also prayed to God, saying that I'd do my best to practice and do my duty well. When I first started practicing my facial expressions and dance moves, I was really diligent and put effort into it, but since I didn't know anything about singing and dancing and my expressions were kind of stiff, there was a clear gap in ability between me and the others. Our instructor was always pointing out my issues. After a while, I started getting discouraged, feeling like no matter how hard I worked, I'd never get any better, and when positions were assigned, the brothers and sisters who were good singers and dancers would definitely be in front, and I'd just be filler in the back row. I gradually became less proactive in rehearsals and I started showing up late whenever I could. For our first filming, I was put in the very back row, off to one side. I was kind of upset, thinking, "I'm not that good at any of this and there's no way for me to compare with the brothers and sisters who can sing and dance. No matter how hard I practice, I'll never be up to front-row standard and there's no way the camera will see me. Why should I put so much into rehearsals? Good enough will be fine." From then on, I was less and less able to muster up any motivation. I knew I wasn't doing the moves right but I didn't put effort into correcting them. Sometimes the instructor told us we had to put more into it, and that if a single person's expressions and presentation were off, it would compromise the whole program and delay filming. Hearing that did have an impact on me and I felt I should keep the overall outcome in mind, but then I would just try hard for a bit,

and then sink back into being unmotivated. I just tepidly rehearsed the song and the moves every day without feeling any guidance from God. There were some moves I practiced for a long time, but just couldn't get right. When everyone fellowshiped on their understanding of the lyrics, I just couldn't fellowship with any light. I didn't feel moved at all when I was singing, either, and on film my eyes were lifeless and my expressions were flat. No one could enjoy watching me. I felt more and more that rehearsals were tedious and I just couldn't wait for that program to be finished so I could go do another duty.

When the chart of stage positions came out, I saw I wasn't going to be on camera in some of them, and I felt even more dejected. I thought, "I'm not great at any of this, but I'm not that bad, either. Even if I can't be in the front row, can't I at least be on camera in these shots? Why am I excluded? Haven't I been rehearsing all this time for nothing? If I'd known this before, I wouldn't have bothered practicing all these moves." After that, whenever I was in view of the camera I'd go along happily, but otherwise, my heart wasn't in it and I just went through the motions in rehearsals. Once all the filming was done, I felt unsettled when I heard everyone talking in a gathering about what they'd gained. I'd done the same duty, and they'd all gained something, so why did my heart feel empty, like I'd gotten nothing out of it? I felt a little afraid, wondering if I'd disgusted God in some way. After that I started seeking and praying to God, asking Him to guide me to know myself. One day, I read these words from God: **"People always say that God looks deeply into one's heart and observes everything. However, people never know why some never gain enlightenment from the Holy Spirit, why they can never obtain grace, why they never have joy, why they are always negative and depressed, and why they are incapable of being positive. Take a look at their states. It is certain that**

not one of these people has a functioning conscience or an honest heart”

(The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Give Your True Heart to God, and You

Can Obtain the Truth). **“Conscience and reason should both be components of**

a person’s humanity. These are both most fundamental and most

important. What kind of person is one who lacks conscience and does

not have the reason of normal humanity? Generally speaking, he is a

person who lacks humanity, a person of bad humanity. Let’s analyze

this closely. How does this person manifest corrupt humanity such that

people say he has no humanity? What characteristics do such people

possess? What specific manifestations do they present? Such people are

perfunctory in their actions and stand aloof from anything that does

not concern them personally. They do not consider the interests of

God’s house, nor do they show consideration for God’s will. They take

on no burden of testifying for God or performing their duties, and they

have no sense of responsibility. What is it that they think about

whenever they do something? Their first consideration is, ‘Will God

know if I do this? Is it visible to other people? If other people don’t see

that I expend all this effort and behave truly, and if God doesn’t see it

either, then there is no use for my expending such effort or suffering for

this.’ Is this not selfishness? At the same time, it is also a very base sort

of intent. When they think and act in this way, is conscience playing

any role? Is there any part of conscience in this? There are even people

who, upon seeing a problem in the performance of their duty, remain

silent. They see that others are causing interruptions and disturbances,

yet do nothing to stop them. They do not consider the interests of God’s

house in the least, nor do they at all think about their own duties or

responsibilities. They speak, act, stand out, put forth effort, and expend

energy only for their own vanity, prestige, position, interests, and

honor. The actions and intents of someone like that are clear to everyone: They pop out whenever there is an opportunity for honor or to enjoy some blessing. But, when there is not an opportunity for honor, or as soon as there is a time of suffering, they vanish from sight like a tortoise retracting its head. Does this kind of person have conscience and reason? Does a person without conscience and reason who behaves in this way feel self-reproach? The conscience of this kind of person serves no purpose, and they have never felt self-reproach. So, can they feel the reproach or discipline of the Holy Spirit? No, they cannot” (The

Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Give Your True Heart to God, and You Can Obtain the Truth). Reading this in God’s words moved me. I realized that I’d been negative and passive in my duty, and I couldn’t obtain the work of the Holy Spirit mainly because I wasn’t honest within my heart. I just considered my prestige and status in my duty instead of the interests of God’s house and my own responsibilities. God loathes that kind of attitude in one’s duty. Thinking back on rehearsals, when I saw I had less ability than the others, and when I was put in the very back where I couldn’t show off, I became negative and passive and didn’t want to exert myself to practice my expressions and moves. I was happy with “good enough,” and I wasn’t thinking at all about how to improve. When I saw I wasn’t in some shots, I felt like complaining and arguing, thinking that all my struggling had been in vain, and I didn’t want to practice anymore. In filming after that, when I was on screen I did my part, but when I wasn’t, I would slack off and muddle through. I did feel guilty when I thought about that. God’s house films choral works to bear witness to God, so my chance to participate in one was God elevating me. I should have put my best effort in and worked alongside the others to do my duty well. Instead, when my desire for prestige and status wasn’t satisfied, I became slapdash, negative,

and lazy. I really didn't have any conscience or reason. I was a selfish, cunning, despicable, and petty person. God scrutinizes the depths of people's hearts, so how could God not be disgusted by my attitude toward His commission for me? Realizing this left me full of regret and guilt, and I said this prayer to God: "Oh God! I was wrong. I have regrets from my part in this program and now I don't have any way to make up for it. From now on, I'll really pursue the truth and stop thinking about my own prestige and status. I want to steadfastly do my duty well."

At the time, I thought all I could do was wait for the program to be uploaded, filled with regrets, but to my surprise, we needed to do some extra filming for a number of reasons. All sorts of feelings came up for me when I heard that. I felt it was my chance to repent. I resolved that this time around, I'd definitely do my duty well to satisfy God. I started throwing my all into rehearsals, and after a little while, I saw some progress in my expressions and moves. I thought we were just about to start filming, but then it had to be postponed because of some unforeseen circumstances. The director told us not to worry and keep practicing. At first, I was able to keep working hard on it every day, but after a while I started thinking, "We don't know when we'll be filming or how long we'll be in rehearsals. Last time I wasn't on camera in some shots, so that'll probably be the case this time, too. Besides, I've already gotten a basic grasp on the song and the moves, so as long as I keep practicing every day, that should be enough." The instructor warned us many times that we couldn't ease up on practice before filming and that the stage arrangements could change at any time. But I didn't pay that any mind, thinking, "There's almost no chance I'll be put up front, so even if I keep working hard in rehearsals I won't necessarily be on film. Why bother?" When the instructor pointed out my problems in rehearsals, I wasn't willing to really work on them, but just made excuses:

“The brothers and sisters in front will all be seen on film, so it’s fine to have them rehearse a lot. But I’ll be in the back, and I won’t even be recognizable. There’s no need to be so finicky about it.” After that, I always felt tired in rehearsals, and like they were really taxing. Plenty of times I didn’t even want to go. I realized that my old problem was cropping up again and I didn’t feel good about it. I had to ask myself, “Why am I always so perfunctory in my duty? Why can’t I just purely strive to satisfy God?” I prayed to God about my true state, asking for Him to guide me to know myself.

I read this in God’s words: **“For many years, the thoughts that people have relied upon for their survival have been corroding their hearts to the point that they have become treacherous, cowardly, and despicable. Not only do they lack willpower and resolve, but they have also become greedy, arrogant, and willful. They are utterly lacking any resolve that transcends the self, and even more, they don’t have a bit of courage to shake off the strictures of these dark influences. People’s thoughts and lives are so rotten that their perspectives on believing in God are still unbearably hideous, and even when people speak of their perspectives on belief in God it is simply unbearable to hear. People are all cowardly, incompetent, despicable, and fragile. They do not feel disgust for the forces of darkness, and they do not feel love for the light and the truth; instead, they do their utmost to expel them. ... You are now followers, and you have gained some understanding of this stage of work. However, you have still not put aside your desire for status. When your status is high you seek well, but when your status is low you no longer seek. The blessings of status are always on your mind. Why is it that the majority of people cannot remove themselves from negativity? Is the answer not invariably because of bleak prospects?”**

(The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Why Are You Unwilling to Be a Foil?).

“Pay no attention to what such a person says; you must see what he lives out, what he reveals, and what his attitude is when he performs his duties, as well as what his internal state is and what he loves. If his love of his own fame and fortune exceeds his loyalty to God, if his love of his own fame and fortune exceeds God’s interests, or if his love of his own fame and fortune exceeds the consideration he shows for God, then he is not a person with humanity. His behavior can be seen by others and by God; therefore, it is very difficult for such a person to gain the truth” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Give Your True Heart to God, and You Can Obtain the Truth).

God’s words incisively revealed my deep-seated, despicable motives, and showed me why, if I couldn’t show off in my duty, I couldn’t help but do it in a slapdash way, and even when I knew it was my duty and responsibility, I still wasn’t motivated. It was because my desire for name and status was too great. Even though it wasn’t obvious that I was pursuing a chance to show off, that was just because I wasn’t that talented in the first place. It wasn’t because I didn’t want to. When I saw I couldn’t surpass the others no matter how hard I worked, that I wouldn’t make it into the front row, I took a negative approach to the whole thing and put very little effort into my duty. I just went through the motions without trying to do a good job. I thought that since I couldn’t show off, I may as well not suffer so much, so that way at least I wouldn’t lose out. Satan’s poisons like “Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost” and “Stand out above the rest” were already deeply entrenched in me. They’d become my principles controlling my every action so that I only thought of my own gain in everything I did. For name and gain, I’d do it, but otherwise, I wouldn’t. That was even true for my duty. I worked hard when I could show off, but when my own desires weren’t fulfilled, I just went

through the motions, not considering God's will or the interests of God's house at all. I was living by my crafty nature, always scheming for my own name and position. I was slack and deceptive in my duty, without an iota of responsibility or any conscience, reason, or dignity. I was totally unreliable. I thought about how so many brothers and sisters I knew were so pure and honest, that whether they were in the front or the back, they'd strive to be up to what God required. Their singing and dancing improved over time and they could see God's blessings and guidance. Plus there were those behind the scenes, who quietly did their own part even though they'd never be seen. They said all their work was worth it just to see the program go online. But when I wasn't able to show off, I didn't even do the little duty I should have. I totally lacked humanity. God's disposition is holy and righteous, so He could only despise and hate the humanity and pursuits like mine. I couldn't gain the Holy Spirit's work in my duty, and I couldn't progress in life. I knew that if I didn't repent, I'd never gain any truth even if I believed until the very end. I'd just be eliminated by God! I felt a little afraid at this point in my reflection and I prayed to God. "Oh God, only now have I seen how shameful I've been, living by my corrupt disposition, without any humanity. God, I want to repent and change. Please guide me to cast off the bonds of my satanic disposition and focus on my duty."

I later read these words from God: **"If you wish to be devoted in everything you do to meet God's will, you cannot merely perform one duty; you must accept any commission God bestows upon you. Whether or not it corresponds to your tastes and falls within your interests, or is something you do not enjoy or have never done before, or is something difficult, you still should accept it and submit. Not only must you accept it, but you must proactively cooperate, and learn about it and attain entry. Even if you suffer and have not been able to**

stand out and shine, you must still commit your devotion. You must regard it as your duty to fulfill; not as personal business, but as your duty. How should people understand their duties? It is when the Creator—God—gives someone a task to do, and at that point, that person’s duty arises. The tasks God gives to you, the commissions God gives to you—these are your duties. When you pursue them as your goals, and you truly have a God-loving heart, can you still make a refusal? You should not refuse them. You should accept them. This is the path of practice” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. People Can Only Truly Be Happy by Being Honest). God’s words showed me that my duty was God’s commission for me, and whether I was good at it or could show off or not, I should let go of my personal motives and goals, take it as my responsibility, and put my all into doing what God requires. Actually, in any configuration, some people are in front and some are in back, and no matter where they are, they’re doing their duty. God looks at our motive and attitudes toward our duty, whether we put our heart into it and take responsibility, and whether we practice the truth to satisfy God. I thought about how I wasn’t gifted like the other performers, but God still gave me that chance to train so I could progress in both my skills and my entry into life. That was God’s love for me! I knew I couldn’t be as selfish, despicable, and heartless as before, breaking God’s heart and letting Him down. If I was in the front or the back, if I could be seen on camera or not, I had to take my place as a created being to purely and honestly do my duty and repay God’s love.

After that, I made sure to pray to God and rely on Him and I worked hard to do my part no matter what we rehearsed. When we read God’s words in our gatherings before rehearsals, I thought hard about God’s requirements, and put His words into practice in rehearsals. When the

instructor brought up my issues, I listened carefully and incorporated her advice into my practice. I would then tally up my deficiencies and use my free time for more practice. I stopped just shooting for the bare minimum. When I set my motives right for rehearsals, every day felt really fulfilling. My relationship with God normalized, I could really feel His guidance in my duty and I wasn't as exhausted as before. After some time, my moves and expressions all improved, and the sisters said that my singing and expressions had improved a lot. I deeply felt how important it is to approach my duty with an honest heart.

Over most of the filming I was still put in the back, and sometimes I didn't want to do my best because I wasn't in the shot. So I made sure to pray to God and think about how to be considerate of His will, how to invest myself right away. It took some time, but my mindset improved a lot. When I was in the back, I prayed for my brothers and sisters in the front. When I didn't need to be on camera, I offered to help my sisters with their costumes and hair, doing whatever I could for my duty. When I saw some sisters become negative and weak because they were too far back, I offered my fellowship on God's will to help them. Doing my duty that way really put me at ease and my state just kept improving. Being able to set aside my prestige and status and practice a bit of truth all came from the guidance of God's words, and I thank God for saving me.

24. The Rewards of Fulfilling One's Duty

By Yang Mingzhen, Canada

Almighty God says, **“Submission to the work of God must be real and actual, and it must be lived out. Superficial submission alone cannot receive God’s praise, and merely obeying the superficial aspects of God’s word, without seeking change in one’s disposition, is not after God’s heart. Obedience to God and submission to the work of God are one and the same. Those who submit only to God but not to His work cannot be deemed obedient, much less those who do not truly submit but are outwardly sycophantic. Those who truly submit to God are all able to gain from the work and achieve understanding of the disposition and work of God. Only such people truly submit to God. Such people are able to gain new knowledge, and undergo new changes, from new work. Only these people are praised by God, only these people are perfected, and only these are the ones whose dispositions have changed. Those who are praised by God are those who gladly submit to God, and to His word and work. Only such people are in the right, only such people sincerely want God, and sincerely seek God”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Those Who Obey God With a True Heart Shall Surely Be Gained by God). Reading these words of God reminds me of my experience of submission to God.

It all started in March 2016 when I fled China to escape the Chinese Communist Party’s arrest and persecution, so that I could practice my faith freely. Some time later, the church leader Sister Zhang came to me and asked, “Would you like to take on watering duties?” Overjoyed, I replied, “That would be great! I’ll be able to help brothers and sisters understand the truth and establish a foundation in the true way. That is a good deed!” I

thought to myself: If the brothers and sisters who knew me found out I was doing watering duty, they'd really admire me and look up to me. It would make me look so good. Just when I'd gotten my hopes up, however, the leader came to talk with me again. She said some sisters had to move due to emergencies, but they hadn't found a suitable place. She said my home would work well, and asked if I could do hosting duties. I felt such inner turmoil when she said that. I'd thought I was going to do watering duties, but now it was hosting duty. Wouldn't I just be spending all my time in the kitchen? It would be hard work, but more than that it would be shaming! Out in the world, I'd dealt in big business and had my own factory. Friends and relatives all called me superwoman. At home, I had the nanny do the laundry, cooking, and cleaning. Now I was to take on that role and cook for others. I really didn't want to do it. But I thought about how the sisters had nowhere to live and couldn't do their duties in peace, plus my house was suitable for hosting, so I reluctantly agreed.

Over the next few days, I was doing my hosting duties on the surface, but inside I was in turmoil, and I started getting suspicious. Did my brothers and sisters think I wasn't suited for watering duties? Why else would they ask me to be a host? If the brothers and sisters who knew me found out, would they say I lacked the reality of the truth, and that I couldn't do other duties, but could only be a host? This thought made me even more upset. I then thought of the resolution I'd made before God, that no matter what duty I was assigned to, as long as it benefited the church's work, I would try my best to do it well, and even if I didn't like it, I would still submit to satisfy God. So why wasn't I able to submit now that I was being asked to do hosting duties? I said a silent prayer to God. I said, "Oh God, You have ruled and arranged for me to do hosting duties, but I always feel like

rebellious and can never submit. Please enlighten and guide me so I can understand Your will.”

Afterward, I read two passages of God’s words: **“In measuring whether or not people can obey God, the key thing to look at is whether they desire anything extravagant from God, and whether or not they have ulterior motives. If people are always making demands of God, it proves that they are not obedient to Him. Whatever happens to you, if you cannot receive it from God, cannot seek the truth, are always speaking from your own subjective reasoning and always feeling that only you are right, and are even still capable of doubting God, then you will be in trouble. Such people are the most arrogant and rebellious to God. People who always make demands of God can never truly obey Him. If you make demands of God, this proves that you are making a deal with God, that you are choosing your own thoughts, and acting according to your own thoughts. In this, you betray God, and are without obedience”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. People Make Too Many Demands of God). **“What is true submission? Whenever God does something that goes your way, and you feel that everything is satisfactory and proper, and you have been allowed to stand out, you feel this is quite glorious, and you say ‘thank God’ and can submit to His orchestration and arrangements. However, whenever you are assigned to an unremarkable place where you are never able to stand out, and in which no one ever acknowledges you, then you stop feeling happy and find it difficult to submit. ... Submitting while conditions are favorable is usually easy. If you can also submit in adverse circumstances—those in which things do not go your way and your feelings get hurt, that make you weak, that make you suffer physically and take a blow to your reputation, that cannot satisfy your vanity and**

pride, and that make you suffer psychologically—then you truly have stature. Is this not the goal you should be pursuing? If you have such a drive, such a goal, then there is hope” (God’s Fellowship). God’s words showed me that true submission is not a transaction, and that personal choice doesn’t come into it. Whether I like it or not, whether it benefits me or not, as long as it comes from God and helps the church’s work, then I should submit absolutely. But what was I doing instead? When I was asked to do hosting duties, being considerate of God’s will or upholding church work wasn’t on my mind, but instead I only thought about whether I’d be able to show off, to make others look up to me, and whether my vanity would be satisfied. How was that submitting to God? I thought back to when I was a group leader. The church leader always fellowshiped with me first about the work in the church. I used to think the leader thought highly of me, and my brothers and sisters looked up to me. No effort was too great in my duty, and no matter how hard or tiring, I was happy to do it. But faced with hosting duties, I became negative, thinking it was lowly. More importantly, no matter how hard I tried, that effort would be invisible to others. That’s why I felt averse to it, and didn’t want to do it. Only at that point did I see that I put so much effort into my old duty because I could show off and others would look up to me. Hosting duties, however, could in no way satisfy my ambition, so I was unable to submit. I then realized that I’d always had personal preferences and choices in my duty, and all I ever thought about was my reputation, status, and how it benefited me. I wasn’t pursuing the truth or submitting to God at all!

I later read these words of God: **“Those who are capable of putting the truth into practice can accept God’s scrutiny when doing things. When you accept God’s scrutiny, your heart is set straight. If you only ever do things for others to see, and do not accept God’s scrutiny, then**

is God still in your heart? People like this have no reverence for God. Do not always do things for your own sake and do not constantly consider your own interests; give no thought to your own status, prestige, or reputation. Also do not consider the interests of man. You must first give thought to the interests of God's house, and make them your first priority. You should be considerate of God's will and begin by contemplating whether or not you have been impure in the fulfillment of your duty, whether you have done your utmost to be loyal, done your best to fulfill your responsibilities, and given your all, as well as whether or not you have wholeheartedly given thought to your duty and the work of God's house. You must give consideration to these things. Think about them frequently, and it will be easier for you to perform your duty well" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days.

Give Your True Heart to God, and You Can Obtain the Truth). I found a path of practice in God's words. I had to accept God's scrutiny in my duty, have a God-fearing heart, be able to let go of personal gain and just do whatever benefited the church. After understanding God's will, I said this prayer: "Oh God, I'm willing to accept Your scrutiny. I won't focus on what others think of me anymore. I just want to be able to submit to Your arrangements and do my hosting duty well." Over the days that followed, my church sisters knew I'd just arrived in this foreign country and buying things was hard for me, so they found time to go shopping for essentials with me. They were really busy in their duties, but they would help me with housework when they could. Whenever I had a problem, they would fellowship on God's words with me, and fellowship on their own experiences to help and support me. None of the sisters looked down on me or shunned me because I was a host. I came to appreciate that there really is no high or low when it comes to doing duties with brothers and sisters. We just perform our duties and

obligations before God. After this experience, I thought I was able to submit a little in my duty, but since I had no real understanding of my nature and essence, I still hadn't completely let go of the pursuit of fame and status. I was exposed again the moment a situation I didn't like cropped up.

Some time later, the church leader gave me a call saying that Sister Zhou had been very busy preaching the gospel, and she asked if I could spare a half day every Saturday to babysit Sister Zhou's daughter. I was immediately against this idea of looking after children. I used to be so busy with my business that I didn't even look after my own kids. Looking after other people's kids would really make me like a nanny. What would the brothers and sisters who knew me think if they found out about this? How could I show my face? But I thought about the real difficulties Sister Zhou had, and I knew that if I didn't help, it would be on my conscience. I thought about it for a while and then agreed. That Saturday afternoon, I went to Sister Zhou's house. I barely made it until the evening when the kid suddenly started bawling and shouting for her mom, and I just couldn't console her. I rushed around looking for treats to give her to make her happy, I told her stories and put cartoons on for her, and eventually she stopped crying. On my way back, I walked along and thought: "Looking after kids is so hard. It's not only exhausting, but it's totally menial and unnoticed." The more I thought, the more aggrieved I felt. When I got back home, I saw the sisters there happily discussing the rewards and experiences they'd gained from their duties. I felt envious and frustrated. I thought, "When will I be able to do watering duties like my sisters? In this duty I'm doing now, I either scrub pots and pans or I look after little kids. What truths can I gain doing this? Will people say I don't have the reality of the truth, so I'm only capable of menial labor like this?" This thought upset

me even more. That night, I lay in bed tossing and turning, unable to sleep a wink, so I went before God to pray. I said, “Oh God, I feel so upset right now. I always want to do duties that make me stand out, that make others look up to me. Oh God, I know this pursuit is at odds with Your will, but I find it so hard to submit. God, please guide me and lead me, and help me to know myself so that I can leave this wrong state behind.”

I then read some of God’s words: **“Man’s corrupt disposition hides within their every thought and idea, within the motives behind their every action; it hides in every viewpoint man has about anything and within every opinion, understanding, viewpoint and desire they have in their approach to all God does. It is concealed within these things”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only Being Truly Obedient Is a Real Belief). **“A corrupt satanic disposition is very deeply rooted in people; it becomes their life. What exactly do people seek and wish to gain? Under the driving force of a corrupt satanic disposition, what are people’s ideals, hopes, ambitions, and life goals and directions? Do they not run contrary to positive things? Firstly, people always want to have renown or be celebrities; they wish to gain great fame and prestige, and to bring honor to their ancestors. Are these positive things? These are not at all in line with positive things; moreover, they run counter to the law of God’s having dominion over the fate of mankind. Why would I say that? What kind of person does God want? Does He want a person of greatness, a celebrity, a noble person, or a world-shaking person? (No.) So, then, what kind of person does God want? He wants a person with their feet firmly on the ground who seeks to be a qualified creature of God, who can fulfill the duty of a creature, and who can keep to a human’s place. ... What then does a corrupt satanic disposition bring to people? (Opposition to God.) What comes of people**

opposing God? (Pain.) Pain? It is destruction! Pain isn't the half of it. What you see right before your eyes is pain, negativity, and weakness, and it is resistance and grievances—what outcome will these things bring? Annihilation! This is no small matter and it is no game” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Corrupt Dispositions Can Only Be Resolved by Seeking the Truth and Relying on God). After I'd read God's words of judgment and revelation, I felt so ashamed. I began to reflect on myself: “Why can I never submit to the situations God arranges? Why aren't I ever willing to do these seemingly unimportant duties? I feel like others look down on me for doing them, as though I'm inferior. I can't hold my head up high, and I feel worthless. I feel like only those important duties where I can stand out and win others' admiration and esteem are worth doing.” As I reflected on these thoughts, I found that I was still being controlled by my desire for fame and status. I was living by satanic poisons like “As a tree lives for its bark, a man lives for his face,” “A man leaves his name behind wherever he stays, just as a goose utters its cry wherever it flies,” and “Man struggles upwards; water flows downwards.” These poisons had long since taken root in me and become my nature. They'd made me so arrogant and conceited. I loved having others look up to me. I loved having a name and status, and I took these things as life goals to pursue. I realized that these were the exact same goals people out in the world pursued. Before I started believing in God, I used to be so competitive. I worked from dawn till dusk and exhausted myself with work in an effort to keep my factory doing well. Whenever I visited my hometown, and my friends and relatives greeted me warmly and called me superwoman, my vanity would be satiated, and I would be willing to pay any price. I still lived by these views after gaining my faith. Doing my duty for reputation and position made me worry about my gains and losses. With a position that others looked up to, I was happy. Without

that position, when I couldn't stand out, I became negative and unhappy, I resisted God, and I resisted the situation God had arranged. The more I thought about it, the more I realized that all these satanic poisons brought me was pain and they made me rebel against God and defy Him in spite of myself. If I carried on with that kind of pursuit, I'd surely end up incurring God's loathing, and He would eliminate me. The more I thought about it, the more afraid I felt about the path I was following. I rushed to pray and repent to God. I didn't want to pursue name and status or to have others look up to me anymore, but I wanted to seek to be a genuine created being in line with God's words. After I'd prayed, my heart grew calmer.

During my devotionals the next day, I read these words of God: **“You believe in God and follow God, and so in your heart you must love God. You must cast aside your corrupt disposition, you must seek to fulfill God's desire, and you must perform the duty of a creature of God. Since you believe in and follow God, you should offer everything to Him, and should not make personal choices or demands, and you should achieve the fulfillment of God's desire. Since you were created, you should obey the Lord that created you, for you are inherently without dominion over yourself, and have no ability to control your own destiny. Since you are a person who believes in God, you should seek holiness and change. Since you are a creature of God, you should adhere to your duty, and keep your place, and you must not overstep your duty. This is not to constrain you, or to suppress you through doctrine, but is instead the path through which you can perform your duty, and it can be achieved—and should be achieved—by all those who do righteousness”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Success or Failure Depends on the Path That Man Walks). Reading God's words led me to understand that as a created being, I should submit to God's rule and

arrangements. I should pursue the truth and pursue change in my disposition. This is my duty and it's what I should pursue. I didn't like the situation God had arranged, but God's good intentions were behind it. He'd carefully arranged all of it to purify me and change me. I couldn't pursue reputation and position, or be picky about my duty anymore. I should focus on pursuing the truth, and accept the judgment and chastisement of God's words to resolve my corrupt disposition. I should put my all into doing my duty well.

Over the days that followed, I stopped focusing on what others thought of me but did my duty before God. Sometimes when brothers and sisters were busy with their duties and didn't have time to look after their children, I would offer to help. When I saw brothers and sisters preaching the gospel and bringing more people before God, I felt glad in my heart. Even though I couldn't stand out in my duty, I was able to put brothers' and sisters' minds at rest and quietly do my part for the expansion of the kingdom gospel. This was meaningful, too. While I was doing hosting duties and helping out with childcare, though my vanity and desire for prestige went unsatisfied, I found it so rewarding. I knew that pursuing reputation and position was not the right path. Submitting to God's rule and arrangements and doing my best in my duty were what I should be pursuing. I truly came to appreciate that there really is no high or low in the duties in God's house. No matter what duty I do, there are always lessons to learn and truths I should practice and enter into. As long as I submit and pursue the truth, then I will profit from it. This showed me how righteous God is and how He doesn't favor anyone. Having this tiny bit of understanding and change is a bounty bestowed on my life by God. Thanks be to God!

25. How One Should Regard One's Duty

By Zheng Ye, South Korea

Not long after becoming a believer, I noticed brothers and sisters who were leaders frequently holding gatherings and fellowshiping on the truth, and some had duties that required skills, like making videos, or singing and dancing. I really admired them and thought that was something to look up to. As for those doing hosting or handling church affairs, those duties weren't much to speak of and were unskilled, so they'd never make a name for themselves. I thought that in the future, I wanted a duty that could make me look good. Two years later I was given the duty of editing documents. I was so happy, especially when, every time I went to the church to provide guidance on the editing work, all the brothers and sisters were really warm toward me and looked admiringly at me. I was really pleased with myself, and felt that my duty garnered more admiration than others did. In 2018, I was sent to another area to perform my duty. While there, one time when a brother found out what my duty was, he started chatting with me about it. Seeing how he looked up to me made me really happy, and I felt that performing that duty really was an honor.

I was in a constant state of smugness and self-admiration during that time. I was vying for name and gain in my duty and not taking it seriously. I was dismissed a couple of months later because I hadn't been achieving anything. That left me feeling really upset and a bit negative, so the leader fellowshiped with me on God's will, and said, "God's house needs people to work as stagehands for our films. You could do that. Whatever your duty is, you have to pursue the truth and put your all into doing your duty well." I didn't really know what that duty entailed, but I figured that I should just submit, because it was what the leader had arranged. After being a

stagehand for a while, I realized that most of it was hard physical work, moving all sorts of props around. There wasn't any skill involved. It was just lots of legwork and odd jobs. I thought, "Before, my editing duty required me to use my brain. It was dignified and well-regarded. Moving all these set pieces around is physical labor. It's dirty and tiring. Will the brothers and sisters look down on me?" My heart sunk at this thought and I felt a bit resistant to doing this duty. From then on, I worked half-heartedly, and shirked it when I could. Sometimes when we lacked a prop and had to borrow it from a brother or sister, I'd have someone else go ask, afraid that if I was the one to do it, the brothers and sisters who knew me would find out that I'd been switched out of my previous duty, and that now I was doing lowly set work. Then what would they think of me? I didn't want to work on the relevant skills either, afraid that if I learned more, I'd be doing that duty forever, and my day to stand out would never come. Sometimes while we were on set, the director would ask me to set up props in specific ways. This always made me really uncomfortable, like it was an embarrassment for me. I thought about how before, in my editing duty, others had respected me and followed my guidance, but now I was the one being told what to do. It was a real demotion. One time, a brother had me go outside to pick some rice straw for the set. I really didn't want to do it. I thought, "Going out to do that is so embarrassing. If the brothers and sisters see that, they'll definitely think I'm a lost cause, doing that sort of thing at such a young age." But since it had to be done for my duty, I just waited until no one was around and steeled myself to go do it. I saw a brother coming over while I was gathering the rice straw. He was wearing leather shoes and white socks—he looked really clean. I, on the other hand, was dirty head to toe. I suddenly felt dejected and upset, thinking, "We're the same age, but he's doing a nice, clean duty, while I'm only able to do the

dirty work like picking rice straw. What a huge gap! How embarrassing! I'm going to go back and tell the leader I don't want to do this duty anymore, and ask him to assign me something else."

After getting back I felt really conflicted, wondering if I should say something to the leader. If I didn't, I'd have to keep doing that duty, but if I spoke up and said I didn't want to do it, that would be walking away from my duty. At this thought, I suppressed my feelings and said nothing. Not long after that, the leader arranged for the stagehands and the performers to attend gatherings together. I wasn't happy about it at all. They could make names for themselves and bask in the spotlight while I was doing menial labor. We just weren't on the same level. Wouldn't gathering together just highlight my inferiority? Everyone actively engaged in fellowship in gatherings, but I didn't want to share anything. In gatherings with the performers, I felt like I only served to make them look better. It was depressing. As time went on, the darkness in my spirit grew and I didn't even want to go to gatherings anymore. I often reminisced about my time doing the editing duty, when I was greeted enthusiastically by brothers and sisters and valued by the leader. Since I was removed from that duty, I'd just been doing odd jobs, and no one looked up to me anymore. I was dejected and miserable, feeling more and more inferior and antisocial. I was constantly melancholy, and hardly felt like myself. I lost a lot of weight really quickly. One evening, as I was taking a walk by myself, I just couldn't hold back the misery within me anymore. Crying, I prayed to God, "Oh God! In the past, I was determined to pursue the truth and do my duty to satisfy You, but now that there's no chance to show off in my duty, I always feel inferior to others. I'm really negative and weak, and I feel like I'm on the verge of betraying You at any moment. God, I don't want to

keep being so negative, but I don't know what to do. Please guide me out of this state.”

After that, I read this in God's words: **“How does duty come into being? To speak broadly, it comes into being as a result of God's management work of bringing salvation to humanity; to speak specifically, as God's management work unfolds amongst mankind, various tasks arise that need to be done, and they require people to cooperate and complete them. This has given rise to responsibilities and missions for people to fulfill, and these responsibilities and missions are the duties God bestows upon mankind”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. What Is the Adequate Performance of Duty?). **“Whatever your duty, do not discriminate between high and low. Suppose you say, ‘Though this task is a commission from God and the work of God's house, if I do it, people might look down on me. Others get to do work that lets them stand out. How can this task I've been given, which doesn't let me stand out but makes me exert myself behind the scenes, be called a duty? This is a duty I cannot accept; this is not my duty. My duty has to be one that makes me stand out in front of others and allows me to make a name for myself—and even if I don't make a name for myself or stand out, I still have to benefit from it and feel physically at ease.’ Is this an acceptable attitude? Being picky is not accepting what comes from God; it is making choices according to your own preferences. This is not accepting your duty; it is a refusal of your duty. As soon as you try to pick and choose, you are no longer capable of true acceptance. Such pickiness is adulterated with your individual preferences and desires; when you give consideration to your own benefit, your reputation, and so on, your attitude toward your duty is not submissive. Here is the attitude toward duty: First, you may not**

analyze it, nor think about who has assigned it to you; instead, you should accept it from God, as your duty and as what you should do. Second, do not discriminate between high and low, and do not concern yourself with its nature—whether it is done in front of people or out of their sight, whether it lets you stand out or not. Do not consider these things. These are the two features of the attitude with which people should approach their duty” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. What Is the Adequate Performance of Duty?).

Reading this showed me that I held the wrong perspective and attitude toward my duty. God requires us to perform our duty, and it's right and proper that we do it. We're not supposed to have choice in the matter. But I let my preferences get in the way, only wanting a duty that is admired and esteemed. I was opposed to and rejected anything behind the scenes or unremarkable. I did not submit to God's rule and arrangements. I was even slipshod, negative and refusing to work, and I was opposing God. I thought back on when I was new to the faith. I envied leaders, and brothers and sisters who were doing performances. I thought those duties really carried weight and were admired by others, and that the people doing less notable physical work had no real skills to speak of. That sort of duty was lowly, and people looked down on it. Since I was misguided in my thinking, I had categorized duties into different grades, so when I started as a stagehand I thought I was just doing menial odd jobs and it would damage my reputation and image. I was really resistant to it and didn't want to submit. I didn't take responsibility for my duty and didn't want to learn the skills I should have learned. I even thought about throwing in the towel and betraying God. I saw that I only cared about my personal preferences in my duty, and that I thought only of my vanity and prestige, and of my own interests. I was totally lacking true obedience, much less was I being considerate of God's will or performing my duty well. My

attitude was so disgusting and odious to God! Realizing this was upsetting, and I reproached myself.

I later read these words of God: **“Humans are created beings. What are the functions of created beings? This touches upon people’s practice and duties. You are a created being; God has granted you the gift of song. When He uses you to sing, what should you do? You should accept this task that God has entrusted to you and sing well. When God uses you to spread the gospel, what, as a created being, do you become? You become an evangelist. When He needs you to lead, you should take up this commission; if you can fulfill this duty in accordance with the truth principles, then this will be another function you serve. Some people neither understand the truth nor pursue it; they can merely exert effort. So, what is the function of those created beings? It is to exert effort and render service”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only by Seeking the Truth Can One Know God’s Deeds). From God’s words, I learned that whatever duty someone does in God’s house, whether it seems remarkable or not, there are just different names and functions of duty, but their personal responsibility remains the same. A person’s inherent identity and essence don’t change—they will always be a created being. I was a created being in my editing duty, and I still was a created being in my stagehand duty. There’s no hierarchy in the duties within God’s house, and it’s all arranged based on the needs of church work, and according to each individual’s stature, caliber, and strengths. No matter what duty it is, God’s will is that we genuinely put our all into our duties, that we’re grounded in our pursuit of the truth, resolving our corrupt dispositions and doing our duties well. Just as it says in God’s words, **“The functions are not the same. There is one body. Each does his duty, each in his place and doing his very best—for each spark there is one flash of light—and**

seeking maturity in life. Thus will I be satisfied” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 21). The church leader arranged for me to do the duty of a stagehand as that was what was needed for the work and I should not be choosy or fussy based on my own preferences, but should submit to God’s rule and arrangements. I should set up the props as needed for the programs and do my bit for every production bearing witness to God. This was my function. I had a bit of a shift in my perspective after understanding God’s will and I let go of what had been burdening me for so long. I was also able to approach my duty correctly. From then on, I diligently looked for materials and reference information to work on the skills, and in gatherings with the performers, I no longer made comparisons between our duties, but instead I opened up about my rebelliousness and corruption. I fellowshiped on all the understanding I had. In my duty after that, sometimes my fear of being looked down on did come up, and I realized I was ranking duties high or low again, so I’d quickly pray to God and forsake my incorrect thinking, focus on my duty, and place satisfying God first. I felt so relaxed and relieved after practicing this way for a while. I no longer felt that working on sets and moving props around was a lowly duty. Instead I felt that God had entrusted me with a responsibility. I was honored and proud to be able to do this duty, and to do my part for the film productions of God’s house.

I thought I’d gained some stature after being exposed that way, that I’d be able to submit to God’s arrangements in my duty and I wouldn’t be negative and rebellious anymore because my duty was nothing special. But the next time I encountered a situation I didn’t like, that old issue cropped up again.

A couple of months later when it was a really busy season for farmers, there were some brothers and sisters who were away spreading the gospel

and couldn't come back in time for harvest. The leader asked me if I could help them with their farm work. I thought, "This could put those brothers' and sisters' minds at ease so they can focus on gospel work, and it would be beneficial for the work of God's house. I should take this on." But when I got into the fields, I saw that the other brothers there were in their 40s or 50s. There wasn't a single person in their 20s, like me. I wasn't too pleased. Just then, a brother came over and asked, surprised, "Brother, how do you have time to come work in the fields? Aren't you doing your editing duty?" My face started burning immediately, and I quickly responded, "I'm just coming to help out temporarily." After he walked away, I thought, "What will he think of me? Will he think that coming to do this kind of work at my age means I don't have any real caliber or talent, and that I'm only here because I can't take on an important duty? That's a real downgrade!" I felt more and more aggrieved. Though I was physically doing the work, my mind was full of thoughts on what the brothers there thought of me, and whether they would look down on me. I just muddled my way through the work. When I got home, I saw some other brothers in front of computers doing their duties, and I suddenly felt like I was on a lower rung. I thought, "Other people's duties are better than mine. Why do I have to go toil in the fields? Whatever the case, I've at least attended college, and I worked hard in my studies. Wasn't that to escape a farmer's fate of working in the fields all day? I'm not going tomorrow." I knew I shouldn't be thinking that way, but I felt so wronged, thinking that having me work in the fields was a waste of my talent and a disgrace for me. I became more distraught as I thought about it, so I prayed to God, "God, I feel that toiling and sweating doing farm work is an inferior duty that others will look down on. I don't want to do it anymore. I know my thinking on this is wrong, but I can't help

it. I'm really miserable. Please enlighten and guide me to understand Your will and obey."

After my prayer, I read this in God's words: **"What is true submission? Whenever God does something that goes your way, and you feel that everything is satisfactory and proper, and you have been allowed to stand out, you feel this is quite glorious, and you say 'thank God' and can submit to His orchestration and arrangements. However, whenever you are assigned to an unremarkable place where you are never able to stand out, and in which no one ever acknowledges you, then you stop feeling happy and find it difficult to submit. ... Submitting while conditions are favorable is usually easy. If you can also submit in adverse circumstances—those in which things do not go your way and your feelings get hurt, that make you weak, that make you suffer physically and take a blow to your reputation, that cannot satisfy your vanity and pride, and that make you suffer psychologically—then you truly have stature. Is this not the goal you should be pursuing? If you have such a drive, such a goal, then there is hope"** (God's Fellowship).

I felt ashamed as I considered God's words. They had revealed my exact state. When I thought I could show off while doing my editing duty, I was more than happy to accept it and submit, and I performed my duty enthusiastically. But when I was helping out in the fields, and my vanity and face were impacted, I became upset and unwilling to do it. Especially when I saw other brothers working at their computers, I felt like I wasn't as good as them. I lost my equilibrium, thinking that since I was educated I should be doing a dignified duty that requires skills. I resisted and complained, and I didn't want to keep doing farm work. In my duty, I didn't consider what would benefit God's house, nor was I considerate of His will.

Instead, I thought about my own vanity at every turn. I was so selfish and despicable. I wasn't seeing myself as a member of God's house at all. A genuine believer who's considerate of God's will takes doing their duty as their personal responsibility, pitching in wherever they're needed, even if it's difficult, tiring, or compromises their reputation or interests. As long as it's good for the church's work, they take the initiative to do it well. Only people like that possess humanity, and stand with God's house. I thought about my recent work on the fall harvest. Some brothers and sisters needed help, and a number of other people could have done it too, so why was it that God had this duty fall into my lap? It's not like I added particular value to that work. But God was exposing my attitude toward my duty by having me do some dirty, tiring work so I could recognize my corruption and impurities while doing that duty, then seek the truth to resolve my corrupt disposition. But I didn't understand God's kind intentions. I was still finicky about my duty and always had my own preferences and demands. I couldn't submit to God's orchestrations and arrangements, but was rebellious and resisted God. I really hurt Him! At this thought, I understood that God's will was to expose and cleanse my corrupt disposition through that situation, and to rectify my attitude toward my duty. This was God's love. It doesn't matter if I'm assigned to dirty, tiring, or unimpressive work. As long as it benefits the work of the church, I should accept it unconditionally, submit, and put my all into it. Only that is being a person with a conscience and reason. As I came to this understanding, I gradually gained a sense of calm.

Later, I couldn't help but reflect on myself: Why had I been so resistant and upset when I had to do an unremarkable duty? Why hadn't I been able to truly accept it and submit? In my seeking, I read these words from God: **"Satan corrupts people through the education and influence**

of national governments and of the famous and great. Their devilish words have become man's life nature. 'Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost' is a well-known satanic saying that has been instilled into everyone, and that has become man's life. There are other words of philosophies for living that are also like this. Satan uses each nation's fine traditional culture to educate people, causing mankind to fall into and be engulfed by a boundless abyss of destruction, and in the end people are destroyed by God because they serve Satan and resist God. ... There are still many satanic poisons in people's lives, in their conduct and behavior; they possess almost no truth at all. For example, their philosophies for living, their ways of doing things, and their maxims are all filled with the poisons of the great red dragon, and they all come from Satan. Thus, all things that flow through people's bones and blood are all things of Satan" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. How to Know Man's Nature). God's words helped me understand that being disobedient and picky about my duty was because I'd been indoctrinated and corrupted by Satan's poisons such as "Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost," "Those who toil with their minds govern others, and those who toil with their hands are governed by others," and "It's only the wisest or the most foolish who never change," and because I'd been seeking to stand out, to be better than others. I thought back to when I was in school. My teachers and parents always told me to work hard so I could get into a good university and escape the life of a farmer, that it would be the only way to get ahead. That was why I studied hard from the time I was little, hoping that I could get a good degree and find a respectable job as a supervisor or manager—something admirable that others would look up to. After becoming a believer, I still evaluated the duties in God's house with the eyes of an unbeliever, ranking duties high or

low. I thought that being a leader or doing something skill-based was respectable, and brothers and sisters would esteem such duties, while the behind-the-scenes, hard physical duties were lowly and would be looked down on. I saw that these satanic poisons had become my own nature, dominating my thoughts, getting me to bullheadedly pursue name and status, always wanting to be someone special. When something threatened my prestige and status, I was negative and resistant. I just couldn't accept my place and do my duty as a created being. I lacked all conscience and reason. I knew that if I kept living by these satanic toxins, not seeking the truth, and not doing my duty as God requires, I'd not only be unable to gain truth and life, but I'd disgust God and be eliminated. After realizing all of this, I resolved to forsake my flesh and satisfy God. I didn't want to live by Satan's poisons any longer. I went to work in the fields again the next day.

I later read some words from God. **"I decide the destination of each person not on the basis of age, seniority, amount of suffering, and least of all, the degree to which they invite pity, but according to whether they possess the truth. There is no other choice but this"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Prepare Sufficient Good Deeds for Your Destination). **"Ultimately, whether or not people can attain salvation is not dependent on what duty they fulfill, but on whether they have understood and gained the truth, and on whether or not they can submit to God's orchestrations and be a genuine created being. God is righteous, and this is the principle by which He measures all mankind. This principle is immutable, and you must remember this. Do not think about finding some other path, or pursuing some unreal thing. The standards God requires of all who attain salvation are forever unchanging; they remain the same no matter who you are"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The Attitude Man Should Have Toward God). I

could see God's righteous disposition within His words. God doesn't determine a person's outcome and destination based on what duty they do, how much work they've done, or how much they've contributed. He looks at whether they can submit to His rule and arrangements and do a created being's duty, and whether they're ultimately able to gain the truth and change their life disposition. Without pursuing the truth in my faith, then no matter how amazing or impressive my duty might seem to others, I'd never be able to gain the truth, much less gain God's approval and His salvation. I thought of an antichrist that our church had expelled. She had performed some important duties and had worked as a leader, and some new church members thought highly of her. But she didn't pursue the truth or dispositional change in her duty, instead she vied for name and status and clung to the antichrist's path. She did all sorts of evil and disrupted the work of God's house. That's why she was ultimately kicked out. I also saw that there were some brothers and sisters doing regular duties, which didn't seem like anything special, but they just quietly did their duties without any complaints. When they ran into problems, they'd seek the truth and God's will. They had the Holy Spirit's enlightenment and guidance in their duties, and they did better and better in their work. They lived out a human likeness more and more. This showed me that in faith, gaining the truth has nothing to do with what someone's duty is. Regardless of what duty someone does, pursuing the truth and dispositional change are key. That's the only right path to take. Now, whether the leader has me work as a stagehand or a farmhand, it's all God's rule and arrangements, and it's what I need for my life entry. I should always embrace it and submit to it. In my duty, I should seek the truth, practice God's words, and act on the principles of the truth. Only that is in line with God's will. Realizing all of this left me with a sense of freedom. The leader later assigned me to more

commonplace duties, which I accepted calmly. I even offered to help brothers and sisters with housework in my free time. When I practiced in that way, I found that whether I was helping with cleaning, planting trees, or digging a ditch, there was always a lesson to learn. God wasn't biased against me because I was doing physical labor. As long as I put my heart into it, sought the truth, and put God's words into practice, I could reap a harvest in anything.

After experiencing this, I truly realized that regardless of my duty, it was what God had arranged for, and it was what I needed for my life entry. I should always accept it and obey, fulfill my duty and responsibilities, and seek the truth and dispositional change throughout this process. Even though I had always ranked different duties, and had resisted when faced with a duty I didn't like, becoming full of rebellion and opposition to God, He didn't treat me based on my transgressions. Instead, He guided me step by step with His words, allowing me to understand the truth and to know a created being's responsibilities and mission. He shifted my misguided perspectives so I could approach my duty properly and begin to obey Him. This was God's love. Thanks be to God!

26. How to Look at Your Duty

By Zhongcheng, China

Almighty God says, **“The most fundamental requirement of man’s belief in God is that he have an honest heart, and that he fully devote himself, and truly obey. What is hardest for man is to provide his whole life in exchange for true belief, through which he can gain the entire truth, and fulfill his duty as a creature of God”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Success or Failure Depends on the Path That Man Walks). **“Duties are tasks entrusted to people by God; they are missions for people to complete. However, a duty is certainly not your own personally managed business, nor is it a counterweight to your standing out from the crowd. Some people use their duties as opportunities to engage in their own management and form cliques; some to satisfy their desires; some to fill the voids they feel inside; and some to satisfy their trust-to-luck mentality, thinking that as long as they fulfill their duties, they will have a share in God’s house and in the wonderful destination God arranges for man. Such attitudes about duty are incorrect; they disgust God and must be urgently resolved”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. What Is the Adequate Performance of Duty?). God’s words tell us that duties are God’s commission for mankind, and that we must approach our duty with an honest heart. It’s essential that we put aside our own interests and do our utmost to fulfill our responsibilities. This is the attitude we should hold toward our duty. But in the past, I always treated my duty as if it were my own undertaking, exploiting it to help myself stand out and to gain others’ admiration. I wasn’t focused on putting the truth into practice, but instead I was thinking about what I stood to gain or lose. This hindered the church’s work. Going through the judgment and chastisement of God’s

words gave me some understanding of the nature and consequences of performing my duty that way, and now I've shifted my outlook on it.

In 2017, my duty in the church was to edit documents. The church leader later arranged for Brother Lin to work with me and told me to be sure to really help him along. I agreed to this happily, thinking, "I've heard Brother Lin was really capable. If he can grasp the principles quickly, we'll definitely see more and more success in our team's work. The leader will think I'm capable and really value me, so I have to help him out as much as I can." I gave Brother Lin all the relevant principles I'd put together for him to study so he'd get a handle on everything he needed to know as quickly as possible. When he hit a roadblock in his work, I would patiently fellowship with him and help resolve his problems. After a little while, he understood some of the principles, and achieved some results in his duty. Seeing him making such quick progress made me really happy. He had gotten a grasp on things so quickly, I figured he really had potential! Our team became much more efficient and a lot was taken off of my own plate. I figured that with a little more time for Brother Lin to train, we'd get even better results in our duty.

One day, the leader said there was a church in urgent need of someone to be in charge of the editing work, and since Brother Lin was good at it and responsible in his work, he would be transferred to that church to perform his duty. I was shocked to hear this, thinking, "What? You're transferring him? You can't do that. I've put all this effort into getting him familiar with the job and with the principles, and our team's work has just started to pick up. If he's transferred out now, our work will definitely take a hit. Then what will people think of me? They'll say I'm incompetent." I got more upset as I thought about it. The leader said that after Brother Lin was transferred, I could train someone else. I didn't say a word, but I was

resistant to that idea. I thought, “You say it like it’s nothing. You think training someone is so easy? It takes so much time and effort! Besides, after Brother Lin is transferred out, all the responsibility will fall on me again. Things are so busy as it is, so with one less pair of able hands, our work will definitely suffer.” The more thought I gave it, the more opposed to it I felt. Two days later, the leader had me write an evaluation of Brother Lin. I thought, “I should focus on his weaknesses and how he shows corruption instead of his good qualities. Maybe the leader won’t transfer him, then.” I felt a little guilty after I was finished with my evaluation, and wondered if I was being dishonest. But then I figured I was just thinking of the team’s work. So, I handed my evaluation in to the leader. A few days went by without any response from the leader, and I started to feel worried, thinking, “Maybe he hasn’t seen it and is still going to transfer Brother Lin? No, I can’t be too passive. I have to think of a way to keep him.” So I tried to feel it out, asking Brother Lin, “What would you think if you were asked to take on the editing duty for another church?” Without missing a beat, he said, “I’d submit to the church’s arrangements. I’m willing to go.” I quickly responded, “When responsible for editing work, it’s important to understand the principles and be capable. Without that, work progress will definitely be hindered. I feel it’s better for you to continue doing your duty here.” To my surprise, Brother Lin wasn’t affected at all, but just said very confidently, “If the chance presents itself, I’m willing to go and rely on God.” I was disappointed that I hadn’t achieved my aim, and I felt a bit frustrated with him. One time I saw that there were some problems in his duty, and I couldn’t stop myself from getting mad and lecturing him. During that time, whenever I thought about Brother Lin being transferred, I’d get really flustered. I just couldn’t find any sense of calm in my work. I didn’t have insight into any issues in work, either. I was constantly in a daze. I felt

really tormented. So I prayed to God and asked Him to guide me to know myself.

I then read these words from God: **“People rarely practice the truth; they often turn their backs on the truth, and live in corrupt satanic dispositions that are selfish and vile. They look out for their own prestige, reputation, status, and interests, and they have not gained the truth. Their suffering is therefore great, their worries many, and their fetters numerous”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Life Entry Must Begin With the Experience of Performing One’s Duty). **“What is the standard by which a person’s deeds are judged to be good or evil? It depends on whether or not you, in your thoughts, expressions, and actions, possess the testimony of putting the truth into practice and of living out truth reality. If you do not have this reality or do not live this out, then you are without a doubt an evildoer. How does God see evildoers? Your thoughts and external acts do not bear testimony for God, nor do they put Satan to shame or defeat Satan; instead, they shame God, and are riddled with marks that cause God to be ashamed. You are not testifying for God, not expending yourself for God, nor are you fulfilling your responsibility and obligations toward God; instead, you are acting for your own sake. What is the implication of ‘for your own sake’? For Satan. Therefore, in the end, God will say, ‘Depart from Me, you that work iniquity.’ In God’s eyes, you have not done good deeds, but rather your behavior has turned evil. You will not be rewarded and God will not remember you. Is this not completely in vain?”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Give Your True Heart to God, and You Can Obtain the Truth). As I pondered God’s words, I realized that God decides whether people are doing good or evil not by whether they superficially expend themselves, how much they suffer, or how much of a price they pay, but by

mainly looking at people's motives and whether their actions are for God, or for themselves, and whether they practice the truth. I reflected on my state over that period of time and saw that my effort to help Brother Lin quickly grasp the principles wasn't for the work of the church. I just wanted to improve the team's efficiency through him, so that I would look good. When I saw he was about to be transferred, I was afraid that the team's work would suffer, that my reputation and status would be harmed, so when I wrote my evaluation I intentionally highlighted his faults, trying to mislead the leader. I even said some negative things to dampen his enthusiasm for duty. How was that practicing the truth and doing my duty? I was doing my duty selfishly, not considering the overall work of the church, but just the results of the work I was responsible for, and whether my reputation and status would be harmed. I was also deceptive and hindered the church work the leader had arranged. That was me disrupting the work of God's house, doing evil and opposing God! When I saw what a dangerous state I was in, I said this prayer to God, "Oh God, I'm so selfish and despicable. I've disrupted the work of God's house for my own interest. God, I wish to repent to You."

I then read this in God's words: **"Do not always do things for your own sake and do not constantly consider your own interests; give no thought to your own status, prestige, or reputation. Also do not consider the interests of man. You must first give thought to the interests of God's house, and make them your first priority. You should be considerate of God's will and begin by contemplating whether or not you have been impure in the fulfillment of your duty, whether you have done your utmost to be loyal, done your best to fulfill your responsibilities, and given your all, as well as whether or not you have wholeheartedly given thought to your duty and the work of God's**

house. You must give consideration to these things. Think about them frequently, and it will be easier for you to perform your duty well” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Give Your True Heart to God, and You Can Obtain the Truth). I found a path of practice within God’s words. I had to rectify my motives in my duty, accept God’s scrutiny, let go of my personal interests, and uphold the work of God’s house. Brother Lin was of good caliber, and he sought the truth when faced with problems, so if he could take on work in another church, that would benefit the work of God’s house. He’d gain more practice that way, too, so I should support him. After that, I sought out the leader and opened up about my selfish, cunning motives and gave an objective, fair assessment of Brother Lin. He did end up being transferred to the other church, and I finally felt some inner peace.

At the time, I thought I’d changed a little. I never imagined that when I encountered a similar situation, my satanic nature would come to the fore again.

In the winter of 2018, Brother Chen and I were working together as team leaders. We made up for each other’s weak points, and with God’s guidance, we were seeing better and better results in our work. I really enjoyed working with Brother Chen. One time after a gathering, the leader spoke with me and said that another team needed help, and that Brother Chen would probably be transferred. I felt that Brother Chen was of good caliber, he understood the truth quickly, and was responsible in his duty, so he was really useful in moving our team’s work forward. If he left and our work was impacted, what would the leader think of me? Would he think I wasn’t competent in my work? I really didn’t want to see Brother Chen go, but considering the church’s work, I had to agree. To my surprise, the leader then went on to say there was another urgent need in the church and he

wanted Sister Lu, another team member, to go help out. My heart practically stopped when I heard this. I thought, “You’re taking Sister Lu away? Brother Chen’s being transferred, and now Sister Lu is going, too. Two of the primary people in our team will be gone, so our work is definitely going to suffer. No way! I can’t let you take Sister Lu.” But then it occurred to me, “If I just flat-out refuse, won’t the leader say I’m being selfish?” I then suggested another sister who didn’t have such great caliber. After reviewing everything, the leader still felt that Sister Lu was the better choice, and asked me to fellowship with her on this change of duty. I said I would, but in my heart I was dead against the idea. After that, I sounded off to another brother, complaining about the leader being inconsiderate of my difficulties, suddenly transferring two important people. How was I supposed to do my work as a team leader? I went on and on, then suddenly realized what I was saying was wrong. Wasn’t I trying to get this brother on my side and airing my grievances? That was offensive to God. The more I thought about it, the worse I felt. I quickly came before God in prayer and reflected on myself. After praying, I mulled over why every time someone within my purview was soon to be transferred out, I dug my heels in, trying everything to stop it. What was the real nature behind my acting that way?

I read these words of God: **“Duties are tasks entrusted to people by God; they are missions for people to complete. However, a duty is certainly not your own personally managed business, nor is it a counterweight to your standing out from the crowd. Some people use their duties as opportunities to engage in their own management and form cliques; some to satisfy their desires. ... Such attitudes about duty are incorrect; they disgust God and must be urgently resolved”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. What Is the Adequate Performance of Duty?). **“In the context of the work today, people will still do the same type of**

things as are represented by the words, ‘the temple is greater than God.’ For example, people see fulfilling their duty as their job; they see bearing witness to God and battling the great red dragon as political movements in defense of human rights, for democracy and freedom; they turn their duty to utilize their skills into careers, but they treat fearing God and shunning evil as nothing but a piece of religious doctrine to observe; and so on. Are not these behaviors essentially the same as ‘the temple is greater than God’? The difference is that, two thousand years ago, people were carrying out their personal business in the physical temple, but today, people carry out their personal business in intangible temples. Those people that value rules see rules as greater than God, those people that love status see status as greater than God, those that love their career see careers as greater than God, and so on—all their expressions lead Me to say: ‘People praise God as the greatest through their words, but in their eyes everything is greater than God.’ This is because as soon as people find an opportunity along their path of following God to display their own talents, or to carry out their own business or their own career, they distance themselves from God and throw themselves into their beloved career. As for what God has entrusted to them, and His will, those things have long since been discarded. What is the difference between the state of these people and those who conducted their own business in the temple two thousand years ago?” (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God’s Work, God’s Disposition, and God Himself III).

As I considered God’s words, I gained more clarity on the essence of my own actions. I was resistant and stood in the way every time the leader transferred someone from my team, mainly because I treated my duty as my own personal enterprise. I always thought of those brothers and sisters as

people I had trained, so they should do their duty within my own scope, driving the work in my team forward, and they shouldn't be transferred. My thinking was so unreasonable, so absurd. Whatever caliber or strengths those brothers and sisters had was all predetermined by God for His own work. They should be placed anywhere in God's house where they were needed. That's a given. But I was trying to keep them under my control, treating them as tools to render service to me, to labor for me. I was resistant to anyone who wanted to transfer someone out, and I even made judgments and tried to form cliques behind the scenes. How was I any different from the Pharisees who opposed the Lord Jesus? The Pharisees saw the temple as their own sphere of influence and wouldn't allow believers to leave it to follow the Lord Jesus. They stopped at nothing to control believers so they could preserve their own status and income, and shamelessly claimed that the believers belonged to them. As for me, I had kept brothers and sisters under my control, not wanting God's house to transfer them. Wasn't I expanding my own sphere of influence and opposing God? I was taking an antichrist's path, resisting God, and I had offended His disposition! This thought frightened me, and I started to detest my selfishness and meanness. I rushed to pray to God in repentance. After that I went and spoke with Sister Lu about her transfer, and then spoke with the brother I'd deceived, fellowshiping and dissecting the nature and consequences of what I'd said so that he had some discernment. I finally gained a bit of peace.

After Sister Lu and Brother Chen were transferred, Sister Li came to the team. She had good caliber and was quick to pick up on things. There was no delay in the team's work. I truly experienced that doing my duty for the benefit of God's house, not for my own ends, is the real way to see God's blessings. God will arrange the right people for the job. He will

uphold His own work. One day, three months after that, when my work partner Sister Lin was back from a gathering, she told me that a nearby church was doing well with gospel work, and they really needed people to water the newcomers. The leader suggested having Sister Li go take on watering duty. I felt a bit disgruntled again, but I realized immediately that my state was wrong. I thought of all the times before I'd disregarded the interests of God's house for my own name and status. I felt so bad, so guilty, and then these words of God came to mind: **"A duty is not your own private affair, and by fulfilling it you are not doing something for yourself or managing your own personal business. In God's house, no matter what you do, you are not working on your own enterprise; it is the work of God's house, it is God's work. You must constantly bear this knowledge in mind and say, 'This is not my own affair; I am doing my duty and fulfilling my responsibility. I am doing the work of God's house. This is a task God entrusted to me and I am doing it for Him. This is not my own private affair.' If you think it is your own private affair, and you do it in accordance with your own intentions, principles, and motives, then you are going to be in trouble"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. What Is the Adequate Performance of Duty?). God's words made it even clearer that my duty is God's commission for me, not my personal enterprise. I can't just do as I please to satisfy my own interests. I should consider the interests of God's house, seek the truth, and do what God requires. That's the only attitude and reason a created being should have in their duty. I used to always think about my own interests, and I did plenty of things that damaged the interests of God's house and resisted God. I knew I couldn't live that way anymore. I had to forsake my own selfish desires and practice the truth. At this thought, I felt really relieved. I said to Sister Lin, "The leader's arranged this to benefit the work

of God's house. We should talk with Sister Li right away about this change in her duty. We can't impact the work of God's house."

Learning to let go of my own interests in my duty, thinking of the work of God's house, knowing my place, and having a bit of conscience and reason all came from experiencing the judgment and chastisement of God's words. Thanks be to God!

27. Rectifying My Motives in My Duty

By Xia Yu, China

I was elected as a church leader last June. At the time, I was thrilled and felt that the brothers and sisters must think well of me, and that so many people voting for me meant that I was a cut above the others. I told myself that I really had to work hard to do this duty well, so that the brothers and sisters would see how capable I was. I was really unfamiliar with the church's work when I started out, so I was really attentive in listening and remember things while working alongside the sister I was paired with, who was more familiar with the duty. I was constantly thinking, "Since I'm a church leader now, I have to do a good job and accomplish some things, to live up to the title. I can't gain the notoriety of being someone who doesn't do practical work, who's greedy for the blessings of status. How could I show my face, then?" I also pondered how to really do the duty well. I was facing the brothers and sisters of the entire church, some who had been doing their duty for many years and understood more principles of the truth than I do. What would they think of me if I try to help them resolve their problems but I couldn't put my finger on the root of it, and I couldn't share a path of practice in my fellowship? Would they think I was totally incapable, that I wasn't fit for leadership duties? I felt fellowship on a higher level than them was crucial as a leader, so I had to waste no time in equipping myself with the truth so that when brothers and sisters did encounter problems, I would be ready to help resolve them. Then they would see that I did possess a bit of the reality of the truth, and I was doing just fine as a leader. So on top of being busy with the church's work every day, I would also read some of God's words whenever I had a spare moment. My schedule was packed full every single day, and even though

other sisters would remind me when they were about to go to bed, “It’s getting late. You should get some sleep,” I didn’t feel sleepy at all and I’d often work late into the night. And even though I put a lot of effort into preparing for them, I still didn’t feel confident in gatherings with brothers and sisters.

One evening, the sister I worked with told me that the next day we needed to hold a gathering for the gospel team. This made me incredibly nervous. I thought, “The brothers and sisters on that team have been believers for quite a while, and I’m new to leadership duty. I don’t really have a grasp on what kinds of problems and difficulties they face in their gospel work. If they mention issues that I can’t address, will they think I’m no good at my duty? Won’t that ruin my image as a leader? No, some last-minute preparation is better than nothing, and I should make the most of this time to equip myself with some relevant truths.” However, as I couldn’t really get a grasp of everything on such short notice, I was unsettled. I flitted around looking at this and that on my computer, one thing for a moment, then another thing for a moment. My mind was all tangled up into knots and I couldn’t make sense of anything—there was nothing for it but to go to sleep. In the gathering the following day I watched the sister I worked with fellowshiping on the truth with all of them, helping them resolve the issues they encountered in sharing the gospel, while I just sat there with no clue what to say. It felt really awkward to me. I thought, “If I don’t say anything at all, won’t they think that I’m just ornamental as a leader? I should speak up. Some of these sisters already know me, and now that I’m a leader, shouldn’t I be able to share fellowship that’s more profound? Otherwise, what will they think of me? Would they say I was no good?” I was racking my brains to come up with some experiences I had had that I could share, but the more nervous I got, the more I was thrown

into turmoil. I didn't know what to say. So that everyone wouldn't see that I didn't have anything to fellowship, I listened intently to my partner's fellowship, and as soon as she was done, I just jumped in to basically summarize what she had said. That way it would show that my fellowship and understanding were better than hers, and everyone would see that I was doing fine, that I was up to the position of leader. I knew very well that everything I was saying was my partner's understanding that I was appropriating. I knew it was a really despicable way to act. I felt a total void in my heart after the gathering; I also knew that all the people, events, and things that I encounter every day are orchestrated by God, but I had no idea how to experience them. I hadn't learned anything. This thought left me feeling awful and I even regretted taking on that duty a bit. For the next few days, I felt like there was a heavy weight pressing down on my head—I felt foggy and like I couldn't get a deep breath. Being faced with problems in the church's work and not even knowing where to start was really painful for me. I prayed to God, "Oh God, I want to do this duty well, but I always feel like I'm not up to the task. I don't know what to do. Please guide me to know myself so I can escape from this state."

After that, I opened up to my partner and told her about my state. She gave me a passage of God's words to read, taken from "To Resolve One's Corrupt Disposition, One Must Have a Specific Path of Practice." It says: **"All corrupted humans exhibit this problem: When they are ordinary brothers and sisters without status, they do not put on airs when interacting or speaking with anyone, nor do they adopt a certain style or tone in their speech; they are simply ordinary and normal, and do not need to package themselves. They do not feel any psychological pressure, and can fellowship openly and from the heart. They are approachable and are easy to interact with; others feel that they are**

very good people. However, as soon as they attain status, they become high and mighty, as if no one can reach them; they feel that they deserve respect, and that they and ordinary people are cut from different cloths. They look down on ordinary people and stop fellowshiping openly with others. Why do they no longer fellowship openly? They feel that they now have status, and are leaders. They think that leaders must have a certain image, be a bit loftier than ordinary people, and have more stature and be able to assume more responsibility; they believe that compared to ordinary people, leaders must have more patience, be able to suffer and expend more, and be able to withstand any temptation. They even think leaders cannot cry, no matter how many of their family members might die, and that, if they do have to cry, they must cry into their bedsheets, so that no one can see any shortcomings, defects, or weakness in them. They even feel that leaders cannot let anyone know if they have become negative; instead, they must hide all such things. They believe this is how one with status should act” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days.).

Reading this was a huge jolt for me—God’s words had revealed my exact state! Why was I so afraid to be on the spot in every gathering? Why did I feel so stressed? It was because I was trying to elevate myself. Ever since becoming a leader, I’d been feeling like I had a position and status, so I was different from before. Now as a leader, I thought I had to uphold the image of a leader, that I should be on a higher rung than the others and more capable than them. My fellowship needed to be more insightful and I had to see into the essence of problems better, and to resolve any issues brothers and sisters encountered in their entry into life. I felt like I needed to be the one who stood out from the crowd in gatherings no matter which team I was with, that that was the only way to be worthy of the title. So, after

accepting that commission, I was speaking and acting for the sake of my position in all things. In fact, I was lacking in every aspect, but I wanted to disguise myself, pretending to be lofty, and I even engaged in cunning behaviors, trying to snatch away the light of my partner's fellowship to shine on myself so that others would look up to me. Day in, day out, all I thought about was how to maintain my status, not at all about how to do my duty well, how to fulfill my responsibilities. I wasn't remotely focused on real, proper work. How was that pursuing the truth and doing my duty? That was pursuing and being utterly controlled by status—it was becoming a slave to status. Even though I had been elected as leader, I didn't just instantly possess tremendous stature or the reality of the truth, but I was still the same person. All that was different was my duty. God wanted me to get more training through my duty as a leader, to seek the truth to resolve problems and to do practical work. It wasn't to give me status at all. But I elevated myself to the status of a leader, even falsely thinking of being a leader as just like serving as a government official out in the world, that it meant having status. Wasn't that the perspective of an unbeliever? It was absurd!

After realizing all this, I prayed to God: "God, thank You for Your enlightenment and guidance that have allowed me to understand that the reason behind my incorrect state was me pursuing status. I was on the wrong path. God, I'm ready to repent and seek the truth to resolve this state of mine. Please guide me." I read a passage of God's words after that in which Almighty God says, **"People themselves are objects of creation. Can objects of creation achieve omnipotence? Can they achieve perfection and flawlessness? Can they achieve proficiency in everything, come to understand everything, and accomplish everything? They cannot. However, within humans, there is a**

weakness. As soon as they learn a skill or profession, people feel that they are capable, that they are people with status and worth, and that they are professionals. No matter how ‘capable’ they think they are, they all want to package themselves up, disguise themselves as lofty personages, and appear perfect and flawless, without a single defect; in the eyes of others, they wish to be regarded as great, powerful, fully capable, and able to accomplish anything. ... They do not wish to be ordinary people, normal people, or mere mortals. They just want to be superhuman, or someone with special abilities or powers. This is such a huge problem! With regard to the weaknesses, shortcomings, ignorance, foolishness, and lack of understanding within normal humanity, they will wrap it all up, package it, and not let other people see it, and then keep on disguising themselves. ... They do not know who they themselves are, nor do they know how to live out normal humanity. They have never once acted like practical human beings. In conducting themselves, if people choose this sort of path—always having their heads in the clouds instead of their feet on the ground, always wanting to fly—then they are bound to encounter problems. The path in life you choose is not right. To be honest with you, if you do this, then no matter how you believe in God, you will not understand the truth, nor will you be able to obtain the truth, because your starting point is wrong” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The Five States Necessary to Be on the Right Track in One’s Faith). Reading this felt like I was face-to-face with God, being judged by Him. It was really distressing and upsetting for me, especially reading, “If you do this, then no matter how you believe in God, you will not understand the truth, nor will you be able to obtain the truth, because your starting point is wrong.” I realized how critical someone’s motives and the path they take are in their duty, that

these directly determine whether or not they can gain the truth. If we don't pursue the truth in our duty, if we aren't considerate of God's will, but instead uphold our own status, it doesn't matter how hard we work, how much we suffer and pay a price—we'll never gain God's approval, but we'll be rejected, condemned by God. God is holy, and He can see into the depths of our hearts and minds. After I became a leader, I was only thinking of my image and status in other people's eyes. Wanting to protect my leadership position, I was always disguising, hiding my faults and inadequacies so that other people would look up to me and admire me. God's commission wasn't what was in my heart—I was pursuing status, taking a path of resisting God. How could I gain the work of the Holy Spirit that way? The darkness I had fallen into then was God's righteous disposition coming upon me. If I still didn't repent, I would certainly be despised by God. I thought about the antichrists that had been expelled from God's house. They had status and always felt that they weren't like everybody else; they became greedy for the blessings of status, elevating themselves and showing off, struggling to wrest God's people away from Him. They did evil and resisted God, and ultimately, their end was to be kicked out, eliminated. As I realized all this, I reflected on how I had been controlled by status since taking on the duty of leadership. I thought of duties as hierarchical, ascribing a title to myself and elevating myself. I thought that I had attained status, and I wanted to show off by resolving other people's issues so that they would look up to me. I was shameless! This thought left my face burning with embarrassment; I felt that I was disgusting, and that protecting my status in other people's eyes that way was essentially vying for status with God. It was the path of an antichrist. It was then that I realized what a dangerous state that was to be in, and that if I didn't repent, I would ultimately be punished, just like an antichrist.

In my later seeking and reflection, I read this passage of God's words: **“When you have no status, you can dissect yourself often and come to know yourself. Others can benefit from this. When you have status, you can still dissect yourself often and come to know yourself, allowing others to understand truth reality and comprehend God's will from your experiences. People can benefit from this, too, can they not? If you practice so, then, whether you have status or not, others will benefit from it just the same. So, what does status mean to you? It is, in fact, an extra, additional thing, like a piece of clothing or a hat; as long as you do not take it as too great a matter, it cannot constrain you. If you love status and place special emphasis on it, always treating it as a matter of importance, then it will have you under its control; after that, you will no longer want to know yourself, nor will you be willing to open up and lay yourself bare, or set aside your leadership role to speak and interact with others and fulfill your duty. What sort of problem is this? Have you not assumed this status for yourself? And have you not then just continued to occupy that position and are unwilling to give it up, and even vie with others to protect your status? Are you not just tormenting yourself? If you end up tormenting yourself to death, whom will you have to blame? If, when you have status, you can refrain from lording it over others, focusing instead on how to perform your duties well, doing everything you should and fulfilling all the duties you ought, and if you see yourself as an ordinary brother or sister, then will you not have cast aside the yoke of status?”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. To Resolve One's Corrupt Disposition, One Must Have a Specific Path of Practice). God's words provided me with a path of practice and entering in. Regardless of whether I have any status or not, I have to properly do my own duty, fellowship on whatever I understand, and when I encounter

something I don't understand, I should openly fellowship with brothers and sisters to seek the truth and resolve it together. I was just performing a different duty than the others, but no one was higher or lower than anyone else. And the fact that I was serving as a leader absolutely didn't mean that I was better than them, more capable than them. But I acted like a buffoon, utterly lacking self-awareness. I also had all sorts of shortcomings and needed help from brothers and sisters, but even so, I thought I needed to be better than them. That was so arrogant and ignorant! I felt like my disgracefully putting myself up on high was simply laughable. I thanked God from my heart for exposing me through this situation, allowing me to see that I was taking the wrong path. I prayed to God, "God, thank You for exposing me so that I could see how preoccupied I was with status, and that I was on a path of resisting You. I don't want to stay on the wrong path. I wish to repent, let go of the idea of status, change my attitude toward my duty, and do my duty in accordance with the principles of the truth."

One time I went to a group's gathering in which three of the brothers and sisters there had been doing their duty longer than me, and a couple of them had already served as leaders. They had shared fellowship on the truth with me and helped me resolve issues before, so I felt kind of constrained in the gathering. I was afraid that if my fellowship wasn't very good and I failed to help them with their problems, they might think I totally lacked the reality of the truth and I wasn't fit for leadership. I didn't dare ask them what kind of state they were in, afraid they'd say something that I couldn't deal with. At that point I realized that I was trying to protect my own face and status again, and so I said a prayer to forsake myself. Then these words from God came to mind: **"If, when you have status, you can refrain from lording it over others, focusing instead on how to perform your duties well, doing everything you should and fulfilling all the duties you ought,**

and if you see yourself as an ordinary brother or sister, then will you not have cast aside the yoke of status?” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ

of the Last Days. To Resolve One’s Corrupt Disposition, One Must Have a Specific Path of Practice).

I knew I had to tailor my practice to God’s requirements, and even though my understanding of the truth was shallow, I was willing to lean on God and do my duty to the best of my ability. Under the guidance of God’s words, I gained a great sense of release and no longer cared what other people would think of me. I decided to share fellowship on the understanding that I did possess. Hearing what I had to say, the brothers and sisters didn’t look down on me at all, but they all said that they had gained something from it.

In the gathering, I read a passage of God’s words that appears in “The Principles That Should Guide One’s Conduct.” God’s words say, **“No matter what duty a person performs, achieving results to satisfy God and gain His approval and performing their duty up to standard rests upon God’s actions. If you carry out your responsibilities, if you do your duty, but God does not act and God does not tell you what to do, then you won’t know your path, your direction, or your goals. What ultimately comes of that? That would be fruitless labor. Thus, doing your duty up to standard and being able to stand firm within God’s house, providing edification for brothers and sisters and gaining God’s approval depends entirely upon God! People can only do those things that they are personally capable of, that they ought to do, and that are within their inherent capabilities—nothing more. Therefore, the results ultimately reaped from your duty are determined by the guidance of God; they are determined by the path, goals, direction, and principles provided by God”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days.). Reading God’s words brightened my heart. I saw that the work of God’s

house is actually all done and upheld by God, and as human beings, we just do our own duty as far as we are able. But without the work of the Holy Spirit, without the enlightenment and guidance of God, we won't accomplish anything in our duty no matter how hard we work. In our duty, we have to understand what God requires, take on a burden for it in our hearts, seek and practice the truth in all things, and work according to the principles. That's the only way to gain the work of the Holy Spirit and gain God's approval. My position as a leader was just for me to fellowship on the truth to help resolve brothers' and sisters' difficulties in their duty and their entry into life. Even though there were times I couldn't solve a problem right away, I could always make a note of it and then do more seeking to resolve it later. And so, I was able to very naturally ask them about what kind of state they were in and what difficulties they were having in their duty. When they shared fellowship on how they were doing, I quieted my heart before God, and attentively sought and pondered it. That way I was able to figure out their deficiencies and shortcomings and use God's words accordingly to find a path for them to resolve these things and enter in. I knew this was entirely God's guidance. I was thrilled, and got a taste of how freeing it is to let go of status. That experience personally showed me that by rectifying my attitude in my duty, setting my heart on doing the work of God's commission, reflecting on and seeking how to do my duty well, and how to achieve the best results, before I knew it, I had been freed from the bonds and strictures of status. I could reap the leadership and blessings of God!

28. I'm No Longer Afraid of Responsibility

By Cheng Nuo, China

One day in November 2020, a leader attended our team gathering and then after it wrapped up, mentioned that he wanted to have us elect a team leader who would take charge of our editing work. To my surprise, I got the most votes. I was utterly shocked: I was chosen as team leader? I had hardly any life entry and I lacked the reality of the truth. Could I really take on the duty of leading the team? If problems come up in our work, wouldn't it be natural to look for the team leader to accept responsibility? What if I couldn't fix them and our work suffered as a result? I thought about a previous experience I had acting as a team leader. I'd just covered my own back without putting the truth into practice. When I saw people disrupting and hindering the work of the church, I didn't put an immediate stop to it out of fear of offending them. As a result, the church's work was compromised and I was dismissed. I felt that if I didn't do my duty well this time, but instead held up the work of God's house and brothers' and sisters' life entry, that would be tantamount to doing evil. Being dismissed wouldn't be my only concern—there could even be a possibility of me being eliminated. I was unwilling to see that happen and felt I couldn't take it on. And so, I told the leader that I didn't have enough life entry and I was incapable of resolving others' problems, so I wasn't a good fit for the position. I came up with a whole host of excuses. He told me that I should accept that duty and submit to it, but I simply couldn't find peace with it. My mind was churning. Just then, I suddenly thought of this passage of God's words: **"You should submit and actively cooperate. This is your duty and your responsibility. No matter the road ahead, you should have a heart of obedience. Timidity, fear, worry, suspicion—none of**

these should be the attitude with which you approach your duty” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. What Is the Adequate Performance of Duty?). As I pondered this, I started to feel a sense of calm, and I realized that this duty being put in front of me came from God’s rule and arrangements. Even though I didn’t understand God’s will at the time, I saw that I had to allow myself to be led by God and submit.

After that, I found myself facing all sorts of problems and difficulties in my duty, and I particularly saw no progress in our team’s work. My worries cropped up again, that if our performance didn’t improve, I just wouldn’t be able to shirk my responsibility as team leader. Thinking about this threw me into a state of absolute turmoil. One evening when I was having a chat with the sister who worked most closely with me about our states, I started feeling really uneasy as she talked about the previous team leader who had been dismissed because she didn’t pursue the truth or strive to do better. She wasn’t making any improvement in her professional skills and couldn’t do any practical work. I knew that I was serving as team leader for a team facing a number of difficulties and problems, so if I couldn’t get a handle on those and do some practical work, would I face dismissal too? I wanted to go back to being a regular team member without so much responsibility. I was thinking that I would do this duty for the time being since I had just been elected, then if I turned out to be inadequate, I should gracefully step down as soon as possible so I wouldn’t do evil that could disrupt and harm the church’s work, and then be dismissed. If that happened, it could even mean losing out on my final destination. I found myself stuck in that state, terrified of not doing my duty well, of having to take responsibility for any problems. When I encountered a difficulty in my work, I found myself particularly afraid I wouldn’t be able to manage it—I was perennially held back, in a world of pain and suffering.

Then this passage of God's words that I read one day revealing the essence of an antichrist's disposition gave me some insight into my own state: **"When a simple adjustment is made to your duty, do as you are told, and do what you are able, and, no matter what you do, do it as well as is within your power, with all your heart and all your strength. What God has done is not in error. Even so simple a truth as this is not in the hearts of the antichrists. What do they have in their hearts? Suspicion, doubt, defiance, temptation.... Such a simple matter—yet an antichrist makes a great fuss about it, and mulls it over and over, such that they do not sleep a wink. Why is this the way they think? Why do they think in so complicated a way about a simple thing? The reason is simple, and there is only one: In each affair or arrangement of God's house that concerns them, they will tie a tight hitch connecting that thing to their destination and their wish to gain blessings. This is why they think, 'I have to be careful; one wrong step will lead to every step's being wrong, and I can say goodbye to my wish to gain blessings—and that'll be the end of me. I can't be careless! The house of God, the brothers and sisters, upper leadership, even God—they're all unreliable. I don't put my trust in any of them. The person who's most reliable and most trustworthy is oneself; if you don't make plans for yourself, who else is going to look out for you? Who else is going to consider your prospects and whether you'll gain blessings? So, I have to work extremely hard to make plans for myself, and make meticulous preparations and calculations; I can't slip, and I can't be the least bit sloppy—otherwise, it'll be easy for people to confuse me and take advantage of me'"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. For Leaders and Workers, Choosing a Path Is of Utmost Importance (29)). Only after reading these words from God did I understand that it's entirely normal to experience

changes in our duties, and that I should approach it with the proper attitude. I should do my utmost to improve in my work and to fulfill my responsibilities, and if I still couldn't make the grade even with my best effort, I would have to happily accept being dismissed. Duties are shifted according to the needs of God's house as well as people's personal ability to take on a given duty. It has nothing to do with people's outcomes and destinations. But I was lacking true faith for God, and I hadn't been able to properly understand perfectly appropriate changes in people's duties within God's house. I had had a twisted perspective, thinking that my duty was inextricably linked with my destination and outcome, whether I'd end up being blessed. I was second-guessing everything, on my guard against God, afraid that I'd be exposed and eliminated if I couldn't perform my duty well, and then I'd be left without any kind of status or future. I was really overthinking it and so caught up in evil! I was trying to be crafty and play games with God in order to protect my own self-interest, making plans to throw in the towel if I couldn't do a good job in my duty. I wasn't sparing a single thought for how to actually perform my duty well, but instead I was fixated on my own future prospects. God elevating me to act as a team leader was giving me a chance to train myself so that I could make some progress in my work and my life entry. That was God's love for me. But I had twisted my idea of God's love, thinking that was actually me about to be exposed and eliminated. Wasn't that blasphemy against God? Wasn't I revealing precisely the evil disposition of an antichrist?

I thought back on what I'd revealed over that period of time: I hadn't remotely understood God, but I was just overcome with speculations and guardedness. I was incredibly upset, and I couldn't stop wondering why I was in that kind of state, where the root of the problem really was. I later read another passage of God's words exposing the disposition of antichrists

that really resonated with me: **“The antichrists do not believe that there is truth in the words of God, and they do not believe in His disposition, identity, or essence. They regard all this with human thoughts and human perspectives, to analyze and examine all that happens around them, and it is also with human perspectives, human thoughts, and human guile that they regard the way God treats people, the various work that God does in people. More than that, they use human thought and human methods, employing the logic and thinking of Satan to regard God’s disposition, identity, and essence. Obviously, the antichrists do not merely neither accept nor acknowledge God’s disposition, identity, and essence, but are full of notions and of vague, hollow ideas about God’s disposition, identity, and essence. All they are filled with is human understanding; they have not the least shred of real knowledge. This being so, how, in the end, does an antichrist define God’s disposition, identity, and essence? Can they establish that God is righteous and that to man, He is love? They most certainly cannot. The antichrists’ definition of God’s righteousness and love is a question mark—dubiousness. God’s disposition determines His identity, and they snort derisively at His disposition, and are full of skepticism and full of denial and denigration for it, so what, then, of His identity? God’s disposition represents His identity; with such a regard of it as theirs, their regard of God’s identity is self-evident—direct denial. This is the essence of the antichrists”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. For Leaders and Workers, Choosing a Path Is of Utmost Importance (26)). God’s words show that antichrists don’t believe that God’s words are the truth, much less acknowledge God’s righteous disposition. They never base their opinions of things on God’s words, but instead approach everything based on human understanding and Satan’s logic. I saw that I was also harboring that kind of

antichrist disposition, that I had no understanding of God's righteous disposition as it relates to the church adjusting positions, or dismissing or eliminating people. Instead, I'd been viewing these issues through the lens of satanic logic like "The bigger they are, the harder they fall," "The nail that sticks up the most gets hammered down," and "It's lonely at the top." I thought that having more status and responsibility would just expose me that much faster and then lead to my elimination. That's why, even though I accepted my position as team leader on the outside, I kept my guard up against God, afraid of being exposed and eliminated if I tripped up, then ultimately losing out on my final destination. I was a believer who read God's words, but my perspective on things didn't shift at all, and I never sought the truth in the face of issues or looked at things in light of God's words, but instead assessed God's work based on satanic notions, imagining God to be some sort of dictator who would expose and eliminate me at the slightest fumble, wasn't that me denying God's righteous disposition? Wasn't that me blaspheming God? The truth is that whenever someone is dismissed or eliminated by the church, it's based on principle. It's based on an overall consideration of a person's caliber, whether they are of good or evil humanity, whether they pursue the truth, and what kind of path they're on. They are not defined as a person, dismissed and eliminated based on their occasional transgression or momentary expression, or whether they have high status. God's house will give extra chances to leaders who truly expend themselves for God and pursue the truth, in spite of any transgressions. They will be pruned and dealt with, reminded and warned, and anyone who is capable of knowing themselves, anyone who repents and transforms, will continue to be made use of and cultivated. There are some false leaders who don't do practical work, who are greedy for comfort, are derelict in their duties, and who hold the position of a leader without

assuming the obligations a leader should. That sort of person, without fail, will be dismissed from their position, but as long as they are not a wicked person who does every manner of evil, they will not just be lightly eliminated, kicked out of the church. God's house will arrange another suitable duty for them, giving them a chance for repentance and self-reflection. There are those antichrists who refuse to accept any truths, who only work for the sake of their own status and power, who just want to seize power to gain control over the church—only they are thoroughly exposed and eliminated, permanently expelled from the church. I saw that God's house treats people in a way that is entirely fair and just, that the truth holds sway in the house of God. No good person would ever be wrongly accused, and no evil person would be easily let off. Whether or not someone is exposed and eliminated has nothing to do with their position. What really matters is whether they can accept and pursue the truth. For those who pursue the truth, when they take on an important duty, when they shoulder more responsibility, they gain more opportunities to develop themselves and are more able to be perfected by God. But those who don't pursue the truth, who don't seek the principles in their duty and refuse to accept being judged, chastised, pruned, and dealt with, whose corrupt dispositions don't remotely change, no matter what their status may be, they will ultimately be eliminated. Giving it more thought, I realized that when I had been dismissed from my position as team leader before, it was because I was selfish and despicable by nature and didn't put the truth into practice at all. I was standing in the way of the church's work. That was God's righteous disposition coming upon me, and it was God giving me a chance to repent and transform. But instead I acted just like a nonbeliever, having no faith in God's salvation and misunderstanding Him. It was then that I finally realized how terribly the satanic philosophy of "The bigger they are, the

harder they fall” had harmed me. I not only became consumed with misunderstandings and guardedness against God, but I’d become more and more crafty and evil. I knew I couldn’t continue to live by satanic logic and laws like that, but I had to look at and approach things based on God’s words. Receiving this duty of being team leader was being elevated by God, and it was God giving me a chance at learning. I needed to treasure this opportunity. I had been a roadblock in my duty in the past, but this time, I knew I had to pay a price in my duty, to make up for my past failures, seek the principles of the truth more, and put my all into it to do my duty well.

Understanding these things has truly been freeing for me, too. When I think back now on how I misunderstood and was guarded against God, I’ve felt how unreasonable I was, how foolish and blind I was, without any understanding of God whatsoever. I’ve silently prayed to God within my heart, “Oh God, thank You for Your guidance, for allowing me to see my own ugliness, and for showing me what a great barrier these satanic notions had created between You and me. I’ve been unfeeling and unaware, misunderstanding things and being on my guard, and I was totally oblivious to how You felt. I’ve been so rebellious, and I fully repent to You.”

One day I read an article in which the writer perfectly expressed my own personal state, and quoted some of God’s words that provided me with a path of practice: **“Man’s performance of his duty is, in actuality, the accomplishment of all that is inherent within man, which is to say, that which is possible for man. It is then that his duty is fulfilled. The defects of man during his service are gradually reduced through progressive experience and the process of his undergoing judgment; they do not hinder or affect man’s duty. Those who cease to serve or yield and fall back for fear that there may be drawbacks to their service are the most cowardly of all. ... There is no correlation between**

the duty of man and whether he is blessed or cursed. Duty is what man ought to fulfill; it is his heaven-sent vocation, and should not depend on recompense, conditions, or reasons. Only then is he doing his duty. To be blessed is when someone is made perfect and enjoys God's blessings after experiencing judgment. To be cursed is when someone's disposition does not change after they have experienced chastisement and judgment, it is when they do not experience being made perfect but are punished. But regardless of whether they are blessed or cursed, created beings should fulfill their duty, doing what they ought to do, and doing what they are able to do; this is the very least that a person, a person who pursues God, should do. You should not do your duty only to be blessed, and you should not refuse to act for fear of being cursed. Let Me tell you this one thing: Man's performance of his duty is what he ought to do, and if he is incapable of performing his duty, then this is his rebelliousness" (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Difference Between the Ministry of God Incarnate and the Duty of Man). As I considered this, I came to understand God's will. God doesn't expect all that much of mankind. He just wants us to pursue the truth, to do all we can to put whatever we can grasp, whatever we can accomplish into play, not muddling through, not being slippery and deceptive, but throwing our all into it and doing what God asks of us. Even if we experience some failures and missteps in the process, as long as we can accept the truth, and accept being pruned and dealt with, these problems can be resolved. We can see progress and change. Since receiving that commission, I'd been entirely lacking an attitude of acceptance and submission. I was afraid that with the slightest misstep, with any transgression, I'd be eliminated, that I would lose my outcome and final destination. I saw I really didn't have any understanding of the truth whatsoever, and that I didn't really understand

God's work. I particularly saw that over all those years of believing in God and doing my duty, it wasn't to satisfy God, but it was just striving for the sake of my own future and destination. I was so selfish and crafty! A duty is a commission from God, and it's a responsibility that every created being has to fulfill. It doesn't matter whether we're blessed or cursed in the end—we all have to do our own duty. I can't refuse to do my duty just because I'm afraid of committing evil. In spite of my paltry entry into life and lacking the reality of the truth, God has elevated me to serve as team leader. It's not because I'm worthy of the position now, but it's in the hope that through the course of me doing this duty I'll be able to pursue the truth, accept being judged, chastised, pruned, and dealt with, and continue to improve upon my personal shortcomings. Then hopefully, in the end I can manage to do this duty adequately. Once I understood God's will, I gained more confidence in facing the issues and difficulties that cropped up in my duty, and I gained the resolve to satisfy God through doing that duty.

I read this in God's words after that: **“What are the expressions of an honest person? The crux of the matter is to practice the truth in all things. If you say you are honest, but you always put God's words to the back of your mind and do whatever you want, then is this an expression of an honest person? You say, ‘My caliber is low, but I am honest at heart.’ When a duty falls to you, however, you are afraid of suffering or that if you do not fulfill it well, you will have to bear the responsibility, so you make excuses to shirk it and recommend others to do it. Is this an expression of an honest person? It clearly is not. How, then, should an honest person behave? They should accept and obey, and then be utterly devoted in doing their duties to the best of their ability, striving to meet God's will. This is expressed in several ways. One way is that you should accept your duty with honesty, not think**

about anything else, and not be half-hearted about it. Do not plot for your own benefit. This is an expression of honesty. Another way is putting all your strength and heart into it. You say, ‘This is everything I can do; I will put it all into play, and dedicate it completely to God.’ Is this not an expression of honesty? You dedicate all you have and all you can do—this is an expression of honesty. If you are unwilling to dedicate all you have, if you keep it hidden and tucked away, are slippery in your actions, evade your duty and get someone else to do it because you are afraid of having to bear the consequences for not doing a good job, then is this being honest? No, it is not. Being an honest person, therefore, is not merely a matter of having a desire. If you do not put it into practice when things befall you, then you are not an honest person. When you encounter issues, you must practice the truth and have practical expressions. This is the only way to be an honest person, and only these are the expressions of an honest heart” (The Word,

Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. People Can Only Truly Be Happy by Being Honest). God likes those who are honest, and those who are honest are not preoccupied with blessings. They are not afraid of taking on responsibility, but wholeheartedly try to do their duty well to satisfy God. They put their all into doing whatever they possibly can. Thinking about this really put me to shame. I was always talking about how I wanted to satisfy God, but when it really came time for me to accept a commission, to genuinely put my heart into something, I became disingenuous and wanted to get out of it. Then I realized I was just saying some nice-sounding things, but in fact, I was trying to fool God, and at heart I was being totally dishonest. When I realized this, I knew that I couldn’t continue on that way. Even though I had plenty of problems and shortcomings, I had to practice being an honest person in accordance with God’s requirements. I had to give my heart to

God and do my duty to the best of my ability with my feet firmly planted on the ground. And no matter how things turned out, I was willing to obey God's orchestrations and arrangements. After that I relaxed to such an incredible degree. When I encountered difficulties in my duty, I prayed to God to seek and resolve them, and when I was confused I explored things along with brothers and sisters, seeking the principles of the truth. I found I was, over time, able to resolve many problems and difficulties.

This experience has shown me how God's judgment and chastisement really are His love and salvation for mankind. I've lost my fear of taking on responsibility and I'm no longer so defensive or prone to misunderstanding. Even though I still have plenty of corrupt dispositions, I'm willing to accept being judged, chastised, pruned, and dealt with by God, and to pursue being cleansed and transformed. I give thanks to God!

29. An Officer's Repentance

By Zhenxin, China

Almighty God says, **“From the creation of the world until now, all that God has done in His work is love, without any hatred for man. Even the chastisement and judgment you have seen are also love, a truer and more real love, a love that leads people onto the right path of human life. ... All the work He has done is for the purpose of leading people onto the right path of human life, so that they may live as normal people, for people do not know how to live, and without this guidance, you will only live empty lives; your life will be devoid of value or meaning, and you will be utterly incapable of being a normal person. This is the deepest significance of conquering man”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Inside Truth of the Work of Conquest (4)). These words of God are really moving for me, and I can't help but think of His salvation of me.

I was born in the countryside. My parents were honest and hardworking farmers. Other villagers always scorned us and picked on us because we were poor. I thought, “One day I'll show them. One day they'll look at me differently.” I joined the army when I was in my teens. I'd take on any task, no matter how filthy or exhausting, hoping to get promoted. But for years I remained a private. Then I realized, it was giving gifts, not hard work, that earned a good assessment and won promotions. It was distasteful to me, but I wanted a promotion, so I steeled myself and gifted my superior with all my savings. Sure enough, I was soon “qualified” for the military academy. Back in my unit after graduation, I was sent to work as a cook since I didn't have money for gifts. I well knew that “Officials do not make things difficult for those who bear gifts,” and “One accomplishes

nothing without fawning and flattery.” If I wanted to get anywhere, I’d have to do whatever it took to find money for gifts, otherwise I’d get nowhere no matter how competent I was. I wanted to get ahead, so I did everything I could to make money, and I fawned on my superiors and gave them things I knew they liked. I knew what I was doing was illegal, and I was afraid of being caught and sent to jail. My heart was in my throat the whole time, but the thought of becoming an officer kept me going. After a while, I finally made battalion commander. Whenever I went back home, the villagers would crowd around me, flattering and fawning. This hugely fed into my vanity, while my ambitions and desires also swelled. As they say: “Becoming an official is for the sake of fine food and clothes” and “Use power when you have it, because after it’s gone, you can’t use it.” I started reveling in the privileges of being an officer, just getting whatever I wanted without cost. Anyone who needed something from me had to treat me to a meal or give me a gift. I even used my position as the commander’s and political commissar’s favorite to get subordinates to give me this or that. I went from being a simple farmer’s son to being an insatiable, sly, deceitful man.

I not only acted like a tyrant in my job but I treated my wife badly at home too. I accused her of having affairs for no reason, deepening the rift between us. In the end, she’d had enough and told me she wanted a divorce. My happy family was about to be broken, and our son would suffer too. I felt terrible and kept thinking back over my life: I’d been determined to stand out since I was a kid, to be better than others. My wife and I both had good careers, and we lived a comfortable life. Everyone admired us, so I should have been happy and fulfilled. Why did I still feel so empty and live in such pain? Was this the life I’d wanted? How should we live, really? I felt confused and lost, but I couldn’t find any answers. My wife later

accepted the kingdom gospel of Almighty God and would gather and fellowship with brothers and sisters all the time. Before long, she became a really positive person. She no longer argued with me, and she stopped talking about divorce. Seeing the change in my wife, I figured faith in God must be great. I also gained faith in Almighty God by reading His words.

I began to live the church life, and I found that The Church of Almighty God was totally different from the world. Brothers and sisters read God's words and fellowship on the truth. They seek to conduct themselves by God's words and the truth, to be honest and open, and be sincere. It felt like I'd come into a place of purity, and I felt a freedom and release I'd never felt before. By attending gatherings and reading God's words, I learned that God is holy and righteous, and that He hates man's filth and corruption most of all. I'd gotten into a lot of bad habits in the army and if I didn't repent, I knew God would despise and eliminate me. I then read these words of God: **"Born into such a filthy land, man has been severely blighted by society, he has been influenced by feudal ethics, and he has been taught at 'institutes of higher learning.' The backward thinking, corrupt morality, mean view on life, despicable philosophy for living, utterly worthless existence, and depraved lifestyle and customs—all of these things have severely intruded upon man's heart, and severely undermined and attacked his conscience. As a result, man is ever more distant from God, and ever more opposed to Him. Man's disposition becomes more vicious by the day, and there is not a single person who will willingly give up anything for God, not a single person who will willingly obey God, nor, moreover, a single person who will willingly seek the appearance of God. Instead, under the domain of Satan, man does nothing but pursue pleasure, giving himself over to the corruption of the flesh in the land of mud"** (The Word,

Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. To Have an Unchanged Disposition Is to Be in Enmity to God). Reading this showed me why I was so deeply corrupted. I thought over my years in the army. I'd followed the unwritten rules of the world to get ahead, doing so many bad things and getting ill-gotten gains. I'd become so corrupted and depraved, living in sin without shame. God's words showed me the difference between good and evil, and they allowed me to see the root of my corruption and depravity. It turns out that Satan is at the bottom of it all. Satan, the king of devils, has used all kinds of education and influences to corrupt our society into a seething vat of sin. People with power run rampant, riding roughshod over ordinary people, while regular, honest people just get pushed around and get nowhere in life. Our society is full of fallacies and heresies, such as "Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost," "Those who toil with their minds govern others, and those who toil with their hands are governed by others," "Stand out above the rest, and bring honor to your ancestors," "Man struggles upwards; water flows downwards," "Officials do not make things difficult for those who bear gifts; one accomplishes nothing without fawning and flattery," "Becoming an official is for the sake of fine food and clothes," and "Use power when you have it, because after it's gone, you can't use it." Being taken in by these things and the pressures around me caused me to lose my way without even knowing it. I'd stopped at nothing to become an officer, abusing my power for my own personal gain. I'd become an utterly corrupt man, intent on profiteering. I really regretted my evil deeds. Thank God for saving me, as He gave me a chance to start again. Otherwise, I would have been cursed and punished for my behavior. I felt so grateful to God, I resolved to change my ways, leave the army, and find a new career. But my superior kept trying to get me to stay, saying that he would promote me to deputy regimental commander. I hesitated, thinking, "Deputy regimental

commander? That would be a dream come true!” For a moment I struggled to let go of that title, and I didn’t know what to do, so I came before God to pray and seek. I then read these words of God: **“If you are of high station, of honorable reputation, possessed of abundant knowledge, the owner of plentiful assets, and supported by many people, yet these things do not prevent you from coming before God to accept His calling and His commission and to do what God asks of you, then all that you do shall be the most meaningful cause on earth and the most righteous undertaking of mankind. If you reject the call of God for the sake of status and your own goals, all that you do shall be cursed and even despised by God”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Appendix 2: God Presides Over the Fate of All Mankind). **“People come to the earth and it is rare to encounter Me, and it is also rare to have the opportunity to seek and to gain the truth. Why would you not prize this beautiful time as the right path to pursue in this life? And why are you always so dismissive toward the truth and justice? Why are you always trampling on and ruining yourselves for that unrighteousness and filth that toys with people?”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Words for the Young and the Old). Every word hammered at my conscience. I was awakened. I thought, “My good fortune to meet God incarnate, who has come to earth to express the truth and save man, and have the chance to pursue the truth and expend myself for God is God’s great elevation and grace!” What could be more meaningful than expending oneself for the Creator? No matter how high I rose in the ranks, would I ever be happy? So many powerful people act as they please and do all manner of evil, but they all get what they deserve in the end. And so many high officials have been rich and celebrated for a time, but the moment they lose a power struggle, some end up in prison with nothing, and some take their own lives. ... This sort of thing happens

all the time. As for me, I'd been clawing my way up the ladder, but I just became so arrogant, selfish and deceitful! Now, God has bestowed so many truths upon me and He's showed me the right path in life. How could I carry on as before? I'd been harmed and fooled by Satan for most of my life until I hardly resembled something human. I wanted to live differently from then on, to follow God, practice the truth, and conduct myself by God's words. So I decided to change career and cut all ties to the army. But since Satan had corrupted me so deeply, its poison of "Standing out above the rest, and bringing honor to your ancestors" had become my very life. In the church, I was always vying for a position, and only God's revelation and judgment corrected my pursuit.

After doing my duty in the church for a while, I saw there was a really young church leader and another I had been friends with before. I was unsettled, thinking, "You were both below me out in the world, but here in the church you're my superiors. I'd be a much better leader than you!" I started going after that with everything I had. First, I drew up a plan: I'd get up at 5 a.m. every day to read God's words, then listen to sermons for two hours, and learn three hymns of God's words per week. I became more proactive in my duty, and took the lead in anything I could do in the church, no matter how hard or tiring. In gatherings, I'd talk about my experiences in the army, flaunt my abilities, and turn my nose up at the church leaders' fellowship. Sometimes, I'd subtly disparage their thinking and actions as though I could do a better job. This is how I lived within the struggle for fame and status, always hoping to become a church leader. Once, I noticed a leader hadn't handled something properly. I gave her a dressing down for not being able to handle things, and insinuated she should resign. I hoped to be chosen as a leader at the next election. When the brothers and sisters found out, they analyzed my behavior, saying I was deceitful, ambitious,

and I wanted to take control of the church. I was dismissed from my duty as a group leader. This really upset me, and I thought, “I used to be a dignified battalion commander, but now I can’t even be a group leader in the church.” After several months of this, I was having none of it, and I couldn’t stand the sight of my brothers and sisters. I clammed up in gatherings. My spirit grew dark and I couldn’t feel God anymore. Only then did I begin to feel afraid, so I rushed to pray and call on God to lead me out of this darkness.

I later read these words of God: **“In your seeking, you have too many individual notions, hopes, and futures. The current work is in order to deal with your desire for status and your extravagant desires. Hopes, status, and notions are all classic representations of satanic disposition. ... You are now followers, and you have gained some understanding of this stage of work. However, you have still not put aside your desire for status. When your status is high you seek well, but when your status is low you no longer seek. The blessings of status are always on your mind. ... The more you seek in this way, the less you will reap. The greater a person’s desire for status, the more seriously they will have to be dealt with and the more they will have to undergo great refinement. Such people are worthless! They must be dealt with and judged adequately in order for them to thoroughly let go of these things. If you pursue this way until the end, you will reap nothing. Those who do not pursue life cannot be transformed, and those who do not thirst for the truth cannot gain the truth. You do not focus on pursuing personal transformation and entry, but focus instead on extravagant desires and things that constrain your love for God and prevent you from drawing close to Him. Can those things transform you? Can they bring you into the kingdom?”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Why Are You Unwilling to Be a Foil?). God’s words pierced my heart and I felt so ashamed. I’d been

vying for position, then was exposed and dealt with by brothers and sisters, and dismissed from my duty. It wasn't what I wanted, but it wasn't because someone had it in for me. Instead, it was God's righteous judgment and timely salvation. God's work in the last days is to change our old thinking and notions, to save us from Satan's influence, so that we can gain the truth and life from God, and live in the light. I hadn't been walking the right path, nor had I focused on pursuing the truth, but pursuing position and reputation. I'd played tricks and used underhanded means to get a position. Wasn't that entirely contrary to God's will to save mankind? Going on like that would mean I'd never gain the truth and would be eliminated. To stop me from going astray and to put me back on track, God pruned and dealt with me through brothers and sisters, exposing my ambitions and desires, and taking my position away so I'd reflect on myself and change my ways. I saw that God truly does see deep into our hearts. I also came to have some real understanding of God's righteousness, holiness, almightiness and wisdom. I was no longer negative or distressed about losing my position, but instead wanted to pursue the truth and submit to God's orchestrations and arrangements.

Six months later, I went to live the church life in another church, where they were about to elect leaders. I was happy to learn that no one there had believed in God for as long as I had, so I thought I'd have a chance. In life experience and years of faith, I had them beat. I should be the clear choice for a church leader, I thought. Just as I was getting ready to make a good show for myself, a sister from my old church fled to this church as she was being hunted by the Chinese Communist Party. I thought, "She knows how I used to vie for position in my old church. If she sees me vying to be church leader again, will she expose my old scandalous behavior? My reputation would really suffer if she does that." Left with no choice, I

abandoned my plans and weighed the situation up: “First I’ll become a group leader and then climb the ladder from there.” To my surprise, however, I didn’t even get chosen as a group leader. The church didn’t have enough people for some routine duties, so the church leaders asked if I wanted to do the duties. Afraid I’d seem disobedient, I reluctantly agreed. I’d been a dignified battalion commander yet was doing such a low duty. It all felt wrong to me. Before long, the police began to watch our gathering place, so we couldn’t gather there anymore. The church leader assigned me to another group to gather with brothers and sisters doing hosting duties. This was too much for me. Not only was I doing a lowly duty, but now I had to gather with brothers and sisters doing hosting duties. I felt like this was so degrading. How could I have fallen so far? If things went on that way, what kind of prospects would I have? I became more and more upset, and all I could do was pray urgently to God, asking Him to enlighten and guide me.

Then, I read these words of God: **“For many years, the thoughts that people have relied upon for their survival have been corroding their hearts to the point that they have become treacherous, cowardly, and despicable. Not only do they lack willpower and resolve, but they have also become greedy, arrogant, and willful. They are utterly lacking any resolve that transcends the self, and even more, they don’t have a bit of courage to shake off the strictures of these dark influences. People’s thoughts and lives are so rotten that their perspectives on believing in God are still unbearably hideous, and even when people speak of their perspectives on belief in God it is simply unbearable to hear. People are all cowardly, incompetent, despicable, and fragile. They do not feel disgust for the forces of darkness, and they do not feel love for the light and the truth; instead, they do their utmost to expel them. Are not your**

current thoughts and perspectives just like this? ‘Since I believe in God I should just be showered with blessings and it should be ensured that my status never slips and that it remains higher than that of nonbelievers.’ You have not been harboring that kind of perspective within you for just one or two years, but for many years. Your transactional way of thinking is overdeveloped. Although you have arrived at this step today, you still have not let go of status but struggle constantly to inquire about it, and observe it daily, with a deep fear that one day your status will be lost and your name will be ruined. People have never put aside their desire for ease” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Why Are You Unwilling to Be a Foil?). **“As you walk the path of today, what is the most suitable kind of pursuit? In your pursuit, what kind of person should you see yourself as? It behooves you to get to know how you should approach all that befalls you today, be it trials or hardships, or merciless chastisement and cursing. Faced with all of these things, you should reflect carefully on them in every case”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Those Who Do Not Learn and Remain Ignorant: Are They Not Beasts?). Contemplating God’s words, I reflected on myself, “What kind of person should I see myself as, in my pursuit?” I’d always thought of myself as a battalion commander, someone with standing. Only a duty with some rank to it was fitting for me, and only people with status deserved to gather with me. I looked down on brothers and sisters who did hosting duties, thinking that being with them showed that I was of no account. Without status, I became negative and resistant, and even felt that life was meaningless. Status, name and gain had addled my brain and I lost my humanity. What a despicable, ugly man I was! How could someone like me be worthy of being a church leader? The church is not like society. In the church, the truth holds sway. A leader must be of good humanity and pursue

the truth. But all I did was pursue status and vie to become a leader. How could I be so unreasonable, so shameless?

I later read these words of God: **“I decide the destination of each person not on the basis of age, seniority, amount of suffering, and least of all, the degree to which they invite pity, but according to whether they possess the truth. There is no other choice but this. You must realize that all those who do not follow the will of God shall also be punished. This is an immutable fact”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Prepare Sufficient Good Deeds for Your Destination). I understood from God’s words that He doesn’t determine our destination based on our status or on how much we work. What’s key is whether we have gained the truth, and whether we obey God. I saw that God’s disposition is righteous to all, and no matter what duty we do, we must always pursue the truth. With the truth, a person can still be saved even without any status. But without pursuing the truth, no one can be saved no matter how high their status. I thought how silly it was for me to pursue status so desperately. I had hated those corrupt army officers, but as I rose through the ranks, I myself grew worse, ultimately becoming a corrupt official just like them. Some powerful people are honest and down-to-earth before they have status, but as soon as they get power they begin to abuse it, and their sins pile up. I thought about the antichrists who had been expelled from the church. When they were lacking status, they appeared not to be doing anything evil, but as soon as that changed, they started constraining and bearing down on others condescendingly, saying and doing things to keep their positions, doing evil, and disrupting the work of God’s house. This showed me that without the truth, we always live by our corrupt dispositions. The moment we get power and status, we become perverse and do evil, that ultimately means punishment! Struggling and striving to climb the ladder in the army all

those years, I was filled with satanic disposition. I was arrogant, deceitful, evil, and vicious. If I found myself in a high position, my ambitions only grew apace, just like when I'd abused my power as an officer in the army. I could only have ended up doing evil, offending God's disposition, and being punished. Thinking of these things, I felt both afraid and grateful. God had brought about setbacks and failures time and again, stopping my ambitions and desires from being fulfilled. This was His salvation and protection for me! Thank God for His enlightenment that let me see the essence and consequences of pursuing fame and status. Even more, I finally saw how important pursuing the truth is.

Ever since then, I've focused on pursuing the truth to resolve my corruption. No matter what duty the church delegated to me, rank was no longer my focus. Instead, I focused on seeking the principles of the truth and doing my duty well. I could feel God's presence and guidance when I began to practice in this way, and I felt an inexpressible sense of peace and joy. After some time, I found that I was much humbler around other people, and I no longer flaunted having been an army officer. When brothers and sisters pointed out my faults, I mindfully prayed to God and submitted, then reflected and tried to know myself. I could get along with others on an equal footing, and no longer thought I was a cut above. Before I knew it, my views on pursuit had transformed. Status, fame and gain had faded for me so much. They no longer held me back. When I saw people become church leaders who'd had faith for less time than me, I still felt a little jealous, but by praying and seeking the truth, I was able to quickly let it go. Now I do my duty at home with my wife. It may not be anything showy, but I'm really content. In our lives, we practice allowing God's words to hold sway, and we listen to whoever speaks correctly and conforms with the truth. I have truly experienced that Almighty God has changed me. He

saved my marriage, my family, and He saved me, such a depraved person. I was so arrogant, conceited, obsessed with status and gain, wicked and greedy. Without God's salvation, I never would have been able to walk the right path in life. I'd only have become more corrupt and depraved, ultimately doing so much evil that God would have cursed and punished me. I've truly felt God's salvation and love through these experiences. Being able to practice some truth and live out a bit of a human likeness is all down to God's judgment and chastisement! Thanks be to God!

30. Letting Go of Status Wasn't Easy

By Li Zheng, China

I was born into a farming family. When I was little, I lost my parents, so my older brother and I had to depend on each other. We were very poor and people looked down on us. I used to think: “I will go to school, and one day I’ll stand head and shoulders above the rest.” Unfortunately, I had to quit school during my second year at high school as we had no money. My dream of standing head and shoulders above everyone else was dashed, and I felt totally crushed.

In 1990, I found my faith in the Lord Jesus. The preacher said that by believing in the Lord, not only will we find peace in this life, but we’ll have life everlasting in the life to come. He also said that the more people we converted by spreading the gospel, the more blessed we would be, and that we’d receive our reward and crown and reign as kings alongside God. About that time, I read this in the Bible: “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: From now on there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness” (2 Timothy 4:7–8). So I decided to give up my family and go spread the gospel for God. I was full of energy back then, and in less than a year I’d converted many hundreds of people. As the number of converts grew, by 1997 we’d established hundreds of churches with over 30,000 people. I had the last say with everything to do with the churches and no matter which church I went to to work, the brothers and sisters there always greeted me respectfully and drove me wherever I wanted to go. They’d provide delicious food to eat and a nice place to stay, and they’d pay my travel expenses, too. I came to enjoy these things.

One day, an upper-level leader had us attend a gathering and said there was now a denomination called Eastern Lightning preaching that the Lord

Jesus had returned as Almighty God and told us that their sermons were very lofty. She said that many good members of church congregations had been stolen away by them, and that even two co-workers from our church, Brother Wang and Brother Wu, had accepted Eastern Lightning. The leader asked us to utterly reject these two brothers and said that if we found anyone else listening to Eastern Lightning's sermons, we were to expel them immediately. I was amazed by all this. I knew these two brothers pretty well; they were well-versed in the Bible and sincerely believed in the Lord. I just couldn't understand how they could have accepted Eastern Lightning. As the end of the year approached, these two brothers made a surprise visit to my house. I hesitated for a long time before deciding to open the door to them, afraid that they had come to deceive me. But then I thought, "Whatever the case, I believe in the Lord, and I can't drive these two brothers away from my door." So I welcomed them inside. They said that to welcome the Lord, I had to focus on hearing God's voice, and that I should not refuse to seek or investigate the true way out of fear of being misled. They then gave detailed fellowship on how to be a wise virgin who hears God's voice, and how to tell the difference between the true way and false ways. I thought what they said was both refreshing and enlightening. I was utterly convinced. When they left, they handed me a book, saying it contained the utterances of Almighty God, and they urged me to read it and not miss my chance to welcome the Lord. After they'd gone, I began to worry that I was being led astray, and that if the upper-level leader found out I'd welcomed these brothers into my home, then I'd be expelled from the church. But then I thought, "If Almighty God truly is the Lord Jesus returned and I don't look into it out of fear of being expelled, then wouldn't that make me someone who rejects and resists God?" At this thought, I decided then and there to look into Almighty God's work of the last days.

After that, I read Almighty God's words every day. Meanwhile, the two brothers gave me fellowship on God's three stages of work to save mankind, the mystery of God's incarnation, how God does His work of judgment in the last days to cleanse and save man, how God brings ages to an end, how Christ's kingdom is realized on earth, and more. I'd never heard anything like it in all my years believing in the Lord, and the more I heard, the more authoritative and powerful Almighty God's words seemed to me. I felt more and more like Almighty God could indeed be the Lord Jesus returned and that I should investigate it. But I always felt conflicted inside. Pastors and elders had been condemning Eastern Lightning for years, and I, too, had gone along with them in sealing the church as tightly as possible, not allowing anyone to have any contact with Eastern Lightning, and expelling anyone who accepted their way. If I accepted Eastern Lightning, what would those more than 30,000 believers below me in the church think? If they all followed me and accepted Eastern Lightning too, then that would be great, but if they didn't, then they'd surely reject me. I thought about how I'd gone out in all weathers, preaching and working day and night, and risking being hunted by the CCP, establishing all these churches with my blood, sweat, and tears. It had taken a lot to get to where I was and to be held in such high esteem by so many people—how could I throw it all away so easily? Besides, even if everyone beneath me in the church accepted Almighty God, would I still be able to be their leader? But then I thought, "If Almighty God truly is the Lord Jesus returned and I don't accept Him, won't I miss my chance to welcome the Lord?" I turned it over and over in my mind, unable to decide what to do. Just then, my wife surprised me by rushing excitedly over after listening to Almighty God's words and saying, "I've listened to Almighty God's words and I believe they are the voice of God. If Almighty God truly is the Lord Jesus returned,

then we have to look into it and accept it as soon as we can!” I replied irritably, “I know that, but it’s not that simple. The leaders and co-workers in our church have sealed the church off so that no one is allowed to investigate Eastern Lightning. If I accept their way, then they’ll reject me for sure.” But this just made my wife agitated, and she said, “For what have we been believing in the Lord all these years? Haven’t we been looking forward to the Lord’s coming so we can be raptured into the kingdom of heaven? Now the Lord has come back, even if you’re not a leader, you still have to accept God’s work and welcome the Lord!” I said I agreed with her, but inside I was thinking, “Yours is just the simple mind of a woman. I have more than 30,000 people to consider. I have to tread carefully. I need to think about it some more.” Many months went by without me accepting Eastern Lightning. During this time, brothers and sisters from The Church of Almighty God often came to see me. They fellowshiped patiently with me, and I did in fact come to feel clearly in my heart that this was indeed God’s work, but because I couldn’t give up my position, I still held off from accepting it. After a while, the brothers and sisters realized the state I was in. One time, when I was gathering with Brother Bai and Brother Song, Brother Song fellowshiped his experiences with me. He said he’d been a church leader before, too, in charge of a few dozen churches. After someone preached the gospel to him, by reading Almighty God’s words, he became certain that Almighty God is the Lord Jesus returned. But when it came time to accept it for real, he began to have second thoughts, thinking, “If I accept Almighty God, can I still be a leader? Can I still lead so many people?” He then remembered the Lord Jesus’ parable of the wicked farmers in Matthew chapter 21, verses 33 to 41: **“There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and dig a wine press in it, and built a tower, and let it out to farmers, and**

went into a far country: And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the farmers, that they might receive the fruits of it. And the farmers took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another. Again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did to them likewise. But last of all he sent to them his son, saying, They will reverence my son. But when the farmers saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance. And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him. When the lord therefore of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those farmers? They say to Him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard to other farmers, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons.” Brother Song said how he felt a sharp sense of self-reproach. The Lord had entrusted him with His flock, and now the Lord had returned, instead of leading the brothers and sisters to welcome the Lord, he was trying to usurp the Lord’s flock and reject the Lord. He said he’d acted exactly like those wicked farmers and that he was a wicked servant who was resisting the Lord. He asked himself, “Do I believe in God so that I can become a leader? Do I do it for status and my livelihood? Am I really a believer in God?” He felt such remorse when he thought these things, so he confessed and repented to God, and then accepted Almighty God. He then spread the gospel to all the brothers and sisters under him. When I heard him give this fellowship, I felt so ashamed and upset. To safeguard my own status, I dragged my feet in accepting Almighty God’s work even though I knew it to really be God’s work. I wouldn’t let brothers and sisters look into it, either; I was refusing to hand God’s sheep over to Him. I was a wicked servant, and I deserved to be cursed and punished! But when I thought of how tightly I’d sealed the church, and how not one person in my church had accepted Almighty God’s

work of the last days, I thought, “If I accept it, won’t I just be shooting myself in the foot? Where will I be able to show my face? If the people in my church find out I’ve accepted Almighty God’s work of the last days, they’ll hate and reject me for sure, and then I’ll be left with nothing.” So I decided it best not to accept it.

A few days later, at another gathering with the two brothers, I told them about my concerns. I was so deceitful back then, and I beat around the bush, asking them, “If the people I lead also start believing in Almighty God, who will lead them? Will it be the same leaders and co-workers as there are now?” What I really meant by this was: “I still have to lead and manage them.” But Brother Bai surprised me by saying, “After we accept Almighty God’s work of the last days, it’s God Himself who leads us, waters us, and shepherds us. In our church, Christ and the truth hold sway. Church leaders are elected, so whoever understands the truth and possesses reality, and whoever can water brothers and sisters and resolve their practical problems is who gets elected.” He went on to say, “If you pursue the truth then you, too, could be chosen to be a leader. There are many different kinds of duties in the church: Leaders, gospel preachers—everyone has their function. There are no such distinctions as ‘important’ or ‘not important,’ or ‘high’ or ‘low’ status when it comes to duties. That’s because everyone is equal before God, which is completely different to how it works in religious denominations.” The more I listened to Brother Bai, the more crestfallen I felt until my face was drooping. I thought, “I don’t think I’ll be able to be a leader to so many people again after this.”

Brother Song noticed how I was feeling and gave me fellowship on the experience of the king of Nineveh. He said, “The king of Nineveh was the ruler of a nation. When he heard Jonah preaching God’s words, saying that Nineveh was to be destroyed, he stepped down from his throne and led the

entire city to cover themselves in sackcloth and ashes, and to fall to their knees to confess and repent to God. God took mercy on them, and the city was spared.” He went on to say, “As a church leader, shouldn’t you try to emulate the king of Nineveh now that you face such a great event as the Lord’s coming, and lead brothers and sisters to confess and repent to God?” What he said really moved me. He was right; the king of Nineveh was the ruler of a nation. When someone of such a high position could humble himself and confess and repent to God, why couldn’t I relinquish my status and accept God’s work of the last days? Brother Song then went on, saying, “When the Lord Jesus performed His work, the Pharisees wanted to safeguard their positions and livelihoods and so they did all they could to resist and condemn the Lord Jesus, keeping the faithful under their control. The Lord Jesus rebuked them, saying, **‘But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for you neither go in yourselves, neither suffer you them that are entering to go in’** (Matthew 23:13).” He then said to me, “God expressing the truth and performing the work of judgment in the last days is the gospel of the coming of the kingdom of heaven. At first, you believed the lies you were told and went along with religious leaders in sealing up the church, preventing brothers and sisters from accepting God’s work of the last days. In doing this, you have defied God. Now, you’ve read Almighty God’s words and have concluded that He is the returned Lord Jesus. If you keep on stubbornly refusing to accept God’s work or to tell the brothers and sisters the news of the Lord’s return, keeping them locked out of the kingdom of heaven, then you’ll be knowingly doing wrong, and making yet another mistake.” He said, “This would be a great evil against God! If brothers and sisters lose their chance at salvation because we prevented them, then this would be a blood debt! We wouldn’t be able to repay this

debt even if we died over and over. However, if you lead the brothers and sisters before God, then not only will they not hate you, but they'll thank you for sharing with them the gospel of the heavenly kingdom and the way of everlasting life."

Brother Bai then read us a couple passages of Almighty God's words. **"When God becomes flesh and comes to work among men, all behold Him and hear His words, and all see the deeds that God works from within His body of flesh. At that moment, all man's notions become foam. As for those who have seen God appearing in the flesh, they shall not be condemned if they willingly obey Him, whereas those who purposefully stand against Him shall be deemed an opponent of God. Such people are antichrists, enemies who willfully stand against God"**

(The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. All People Who Do Not Know God Are People Who Oppose God). **"There are those who read the Bible in grand churches and recite it all day long, yet not one among them understands the purpose of God's work. Not one among them is able to know God; still less can any one among them accord with God's will. They are all worthless, vile people, each standing on high to lecture God. They willfully oppose God even as they carry His banner. Claiming faith in God, still they eat the flesh and drink the blood of man. All such people are devils that devour the soul of man, head demons that deliberately get in the way of those trying to step onto the right path, and stumbling blocks impeding those who seek God. They may appear of 'sound constitution,' but how are their followers to know that they are none other than antichrists who lead people to stand against God? How are their followers to know that they are living devils dedicated to the devouring of human souls?"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. All People Who Do Not Know God Are People Who Oppose God).

After he'd read these passages, I felt quite distressed. I felt like I'd been given a slap across the face and I turned beet red. I wanted the ground to open and swallow me up. I knew perfectly well that the Lord Jesus had returned, and that He was expressing many truths and performing the work of judging and cleansing man. But in order to safeguard my position and livelihood, I'd refused to accept God's work of the last days and had sealed off the church so that God's sheep couldn't hear His voice and turn to Him. How was I any different from the Pharisees who resisted the Lord Jesus all those years ago? The Lord is our Shepherd, and now He had returned to call His sheep back to Him; I had to hand God's sheep back over to Him. How could I still try to protect my position now? Was I to wait until God's punishment came upon me? I decided I couldn't defy God any longer. Even if I was no longer a leader and everyone rejected me, I still had to accept God's work of the last days, lead the brothers and sisters before God, and return God's flock to Him. As I thought this, I made up my mind to accept Almighty God's work of the last days and to begin preaching the gospel to those I led.

Some time later, with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, more than 10,000 people in my church accepted God's work of the last days. Thanks be to God, I'd finally led God's flock before Him, and I felt so peaceful and at ease.

Six months later, more and more people over a large area had joined the church, so the churches had to be divided up by region and leaders and workers elected. I was so arrogant, though, thinking, "However you divide the churches up, I'll still be a leader, due to my work capabilities and experience. I can manage several churches, no problem." However, a few days later, I was in a gathering with two brothers when a church leader came over and said, "Now is the time to spread the kingdom gospel. We

need some brothers and sisters with good caliber who know the Bible well to go spread the gospel in other areas. This is an especially important task. Would you three be willing to go?" The two brothers gladly said they would, but I wasn't too happy about it, thinking to myself, "I led churches in my old denomination for years, managing many thousands of people. Now I'm back to preaching the gospel again while some of the co-workers under me have become leaders. How will I ever be able to show my face? It's humiliating!" I thought over all the years I'd served as a leader, being held in high esteem and idolized wherever I went, being treated to everything I could want. Now I had nothing, and I had to go suffer to preach the gospel again. I just couldn't take it. But it would've been too embarrassing to have refused in front of the others, so I reluctantly agreed. I thought to myself, "I have to preach the gospel well. As long as I can convert lots of people, then brothers and sisters will still look up to me." And when I got to it, I did manage to do well at preaching the gospel. Before too long, over 400 people had accepted God's new work. I felt at that time that no matter where I went, brothers and sisters greeted me enthusiastically and looked up to me. I was living once again in that enjoyment brought by the position I held, and my zest for spreading the gospel only increased.

In August 2000, I traveled out of town with Brother Liu to spread the gospel. Brother Liu had been a believer in Almighty God longer than I had and fellowshiped clearly on the truth. I was happy, too, thinking how great it was that I could draw on his strengths to make up for my own shortcomings. One time, he and I went to preach the gospel to a group of people belonging to a religious denomination. They held forth some religious notions, and I wanted to give them fellowship. But because my own understanding of the truth was so lacking, I was anxious to help but I

wasn't able to. In the end, Brother Liu calmly fellowshiped with them to refute their notions, speaking factually and reasonably. Those people we were fellowshiping with didn't accept it at first, but as they listened, they began to become certain that what Brother Liu was saying was true, until finally they were nodding in agreement. Seeing that scene play out, I felt both jealousy and admiration for Brother Liu. I thought: "Brother Liu fellowshiped so clearly. If this goes on, my only role will be to make him look good, and the others will say he's better than me. That won't do! I have to equip myself with the truth and try to outdo Brother Liu." After I got back home, I started to read God's words from dawn till dusk, arming myself with the truths of spreading the gospel. Even during mealtimes, I'd think about how Brother Liu gave fellowship so I could know how to fellowship with the gospel targets next time, so that I at least looked as good as Brother Liu.

To my surprise, however, the next time we went to preach the gospel to those people, they came up with some new questions, and again I wasn't able to give clear fellowship. Seeing them not really understanding what I was saying made me feel so embarrassed. At that moment, Brother Liu hurriedly took over. They listened to him attentively, nodding every now and then, and in the end they'd understood everything very well. I, however, had only succeeded in embarrassing myself and wanted the earth to open up and swallow me whole. I thought: "I came with Brother Liu, but I couldn't fellowship clearly and was of no use whatsoever. They still need him to step in and help address their issues. How humiliating!" To recover some dignity, I remember taking advantage of a pause in Brother Liu's fellowship to say a few words. A day later, they all accepted the gospel. This made me really happy, but inside I felt a little crestfallen. I felt like their accepting the gospel hadn't been down to me, and I hadn't made a

good show of myself. After we'd eaten a meal together, those newcomers asked us to talk about our experiences. I thought: "Usually Brother Liu is the one who stands out, but this time I have to take the opportunity to talk about my own experiences so that they don't think I'm someone of no account." So I began to talk on and on about the work I'd done, the suffering I'd endured, and how I'd led over 10,000 people back to God. I really laid it on thick. Some of those brothers and sisters were amazed, some looked at me with admiration, while others just listened attentively. I was delighted. I held myself straight and spoke with confidence.

When I got home that day, I thought, "I lack a lot of truths when it comes to spreading the gospel. Should I seek with Brother Liu about this?" But then I thought, "If I seek about this with Brother Liu, won't that show that he's better than me? Forget it, I'll just keep arming myself with the truths in secret. I won't ask him." Later, when we both went to preach the gospel again, the brothers and sisters greeted Brother Liu so warmly. They flocked around him, asking him about this and that. This really upset me and I just hung my head and stood to one side, thinking, "What's the point in me being here when Brother Liu gives such good fellowship? Aren't I just a fifth wheel in the others' eyes? He's the one who always stands out and if that carries on then no one will think highly of me at all." A rebellious thought suddenly occurred to me, that I really didn't want to do my duty with Brother Liu anymore. After I'd had this thought, whenever Brother Liu and I were about to go preach the gospel, I began to find excuses, saying that I wasn't feeling well and wanted to stay behind. Sometimes, even when I did go with him, I didn't give fellowship, and only when someone asked me a question did I reluctantly fellowship a few words. I basically just wouldn't work with him. We ended up working together for over two months, with me constantly vying for fame and

struggling for my own personal interests. My state became darker and darker, worse and worse, and yet repentance never entered my head. It was at this time that God chastened and disciplined me.

One day, I was told to go to northeast China to spread the gospel there. When I heard this, I was overjoyed, thinking, “At last, I don’t need to work with Brother Liu anymore. This is my time to shine, and when I convert people by preaching the gospel to them, it’ll all be down to me alone. The brothers and sisters will surely look up to me.” What I couldn’t have known was that, on my way traveling there, the police saw that I didn’t have my ID card with me and arrested me, thinking I was some sort of murderer on the run. No matter how I tried to explain, they just wouldn’t listen, and they tortured me for three days and nights. I wasn’t allowed to eat anything, or sleep, or even to drink a mouthful of water. They beat me until my mouth and nose bled and my eyes were so swollen I couldn’t open them. I was beaten to a pulp. I remember passing out many times; death would have been a blessed relief. I felt such distress in my heart and I hated these devils for being so evil. They didn’t make a thorough investigation and had no evidence at all, and yet I was brutally interrogated. Back then, I just kept praying to God, asking Him to protect and guide me. I realized that God was permitting all this to happen to me, and that I had to seek the truth and learn from what was happening. I then began to reflect on myself: “Why is this happening to me?” Just then, a passage of God’s words came to mind: **“The more you seek in this way, the less you will reap. The greater a person’s desire for status, the more seriously they will have to be dealt with and the more they will have to undergo great refinement. Such people are worthless! They must be dealt with and judged adequately in order for them to thoroughly let go of these things. If you pursue this way until the end, you will reap nothing”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and

Work of God. Why Are You Unwilling to Be a Foil?). As I contemplated God's words, I realized just how great my desire for status was. I thought over the time I'd spent preaching the gospel with Brother Liu. When I saw him give good fellowship and everyone looking at him admiringly, I became jealous and wanted to vie with him, to see who was better. I talked about my own experiences in front of newcomers to exalt myself and show off so that they would look up to me and idolize me. When I didn't receive any admiration from brothers and sisters, I became negative and resistant, and no longer wanted to work with Brother Liu, and in my duty I just went through the motions. I saw that I hadn't been performing my duty to testify to God but had been using it to get fame and status in return; I was so despicable! I'd done nothing but pursue fame and my own personal interests, and repentance never even came into my mind, despite having fallen so deeply into darkness. I was so rebellious! The more I thought about it, the more I hated myself, so I prayed to God. I said, "Dear God, I always used to pursue status in my duty and vie for fame and gain. How You must have hated it! Now You are chastening and disciplining me, and I want to reflect on myself in earnest, and obey Your arrangements and orchestrations. If I live through this, I wish to let go of my status and pursue the truth in earnest." To my surprise, when I submitted and learned some lessons, God showed me His mercy. The police managed to find my ID in their system and, realizing that I was no murderer, they let me go.

When I got back home, I went to hospital for a checkup. My right leg was broken, as was one of my ribs. Over the next few months, I ate and drank God's words and reflected on myself while recuperating at home. One day, I read a passage of God's words. Almighty God says, **"In your seeking, you have too many individual notions, hopes, and futures. The current work is in order to deal with your desire for status and your**

extravagant desires. Hopes, status, and notions are all classic representations of satanic disposition. The reason that these things exist in people's hearts is entirely because Satan's poison is always corroding people's thoughts, and always people are unable to shake off these temptations of Satan. They are living in the midst of sin yet do not believe it to be sin, and still they think: 'We believe in God, so He must bestow blessings on us and arrange everything for us appropriately. We believe in God, so we must be superior to others, and we must have more status and more of a future than anyone else. Since we believe in God, He must give us limitless blessings. Otherwise, it wouldn't be called believing in God.' For many years, the thoughts that people have relied upon for their survival have been corroding their hearts to the point that they have become treacherous, cowardly, and despicable. Not only do they lack willpower and resolve, but they have also become greedy, arrogant, and willful. They are utterly lacking any resolve that transcends the self, and even more, they don't have a bit of courage to shake off the strictures of these dark influences. People's thoughts and lives are so rotten that their perspectives on believing in God are still unbearably hideous, and even when people speak of their perspectives on belief in God it is simply unbearable to hear. People are all cowardly, incompetent, despicable, and fragile. They do not feel disgust for the forces of darkness, and they do not feel love for the light and the truth; instead, they do their utmost to expel them. Are not your current thoughts and perspectives just like this? 'Since I believe in God I should just be showered with blessings and it should be ensured that my status never slips and that it remains higher than that of nonbelievers.' You have not been harboring that kind of perspective within you for just one or two years, but for many years. Your

transactional way of thinking is overdeveloped. Although you have arrived at this step today, you still have not let go of status but struggle constantly to inquire about it, and observe it daily, with a deep fear that one day your status will be lost and your name will be ruined. People have never put aside their desire for ease. ... It is difficult for you to put aside your prospects and destiny. You are now followers, and you have gained some understanding of this stage of work. However, you have still not put aside your desire for status. When your status is high you seek well, but when your status is low you no longer seek. The blessings of status are always on your mind. Why is it that the majority of people cannot remove themselves from negativity? Is the answer not invariably because of bleak prospects?” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Why Are You Unwilling to Be a Foil?).

I also listened to a hymn of God's words. **“Man lives amid the flesh, which means he lives in a human hell, and without God's judgment and chastisement, man is as filthy as Satan. Chastisement and judgment by God are man's best protection and greatest grace. Only through chastisement and judgment by God can man awaken and hate the flesh, hate Satan. God's strict discipline frees man from the influence of Satan, frees him from his own little world, and allows him to live in the light of God's presence. There is no better salvation than chastisement and judgment!”** (Follow the Lamb and Sing New Songs, God's Chastisement and Judgment Is the Light of Man's Salvation). I cried a lot as I listened to this hymn. I finally realized that God judges and chastises not because He hates man, but because He wants to save man. He wanted to rectify my wrong view of pursuing fame and status. Ever since I was small, I'd lived by the satanic poisons of “Stand out above the rest, and bring honor to your ancestors,” and “Man struggles upwards; water flows downwards.” I wanted to stand

out above the rest every chance I got, and I even dreamed of it. After I began believing in the Lord, I made sacrifices and expended myself just to get high status so that brothers and sisters would look up to me and idolize me. I even wanted to reign like a king alongside Christ. There was no limit to my ambitions! When I heard the gospel of Almighty God, I knew then that the Lord had come, but because I couldn't give up my position as leader, I didn't want to accept it, and almost became an evil servant who stopped the faithful from getting into God's kingdom. Over the previous two years since I accepted Almighty God's work, on the outside I looked as though I'd given up my leadership position, but my heart was still under the control of fame and status. When brothers and sisters admired and idolized me, I was happy and energized in my duty. But when they were indifferent to me, I became dejected and upset, and no longer wanted to do my duty. I saw that I wasn't doing my duty to pursue the truth and have my disposition changed, or to be commended by God, but to stand out above the rest so that others would look up to me, and to fulfill my own ambitions and desires. Wasn't I brazenly using God and trying to cheat Him? I was defying God! I was living by these satanic poisons, growing more and more arrogant, without a shred of humanity or reason. Had it not been for the judgment and revelations of God's words, and for His chastening and discipline, I'd never have realized how deeply I'd been corrupted by Satan, or how great my desire for status was. I would have just coveted the blessings of status more and more and become more and more depraved, until finally I was cursed and punished by God. I finally came to appreciate that whatever God does, whether it be judging, chastising, chastening or disciplining, it is all salvation and love for mankind.

I then read this in God's words: **“God’s viewpoint is to demand that man recover his original duty and status. Man is a creature of God, and**

so man should not overstep himself by making any demands of God, and should do nothing more than perform his duty as a creature of God” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Success or Failure Depends on the Path That Man Walks). **“Man, as a creature of God, must also perform the duty of man. Regardless of whether he is the lord or caretaker of all things, no matter how high man’s status among all things, still he is but a small human being under the dominion of God, and is no more than an insignificant human being, a creature of God, and he will never be above God. As a creature of God, man should seek to perform the duty of a creature of God, and seek to love God without making other choices, for God is worthy of man’s love. Those who seek to love God should not seek any personal benefits or seek that which they personally long for; this is the most correct means of pursuit. If what you seek is the truth, if what you put into practice is the truth, and if what you attain is a change in your disposition, then the path that you tread is the right one. If what you seek is the blessings of the flesh, and what you put into practice is the truth of your own notions, and if there is no change in your disposition, and you are not at all obedient to God in the flesh, and you still live in vagueness, then what you seek will surely take you to hell, for the path that you walk is the path of failure. Whether you will be made perfect or eliminated depends on your own pursuit, which is also to say that success or failure depends on the path that man walks”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Success or Failure Depends on the Path That Man Walks). After reading God’s words, I understood that I’m a created being who should take my proper place, seek to love God, obey God, cast off my corrupt dispositions, and do my duty as a created being well. This is the only right pursuit. I also realized that whether or not someone can attain salvation and be perfected has nothing to do with

whether they have status or not. Whatever duty someone does, what God looks at is their sincerity and obedience, seeing whether they pursue the truth and whether their life disposition has changed. When I realized this, I said a prayer to God: “No matter what duty I do in the future, whether I have any status or not, I wish to pursue the truth in earnest and do my duty as a created being well.” It was more than two months later that my injuries started to get better and I was able to go out preaching the gospel again. What had changed was that I no longer felt like I was without status, and when working with others, I no longer vied to be the best. I felt like just doing my duty showed that I’d been raised up by God.

Years went by, and I thought I was free of the bonds and fetters of status. But when God arranged a new situation for me, my desire for status raised its ugly head again. It was the winter of 2012. The police were frantically arresting Christians, and it was a very bad time. One day, the leaders and deacons held a gathering in our village. One of the leaders saw I had some free time, so asked me to go stand on the street corner and act as a lookout. I felt really unhappy about this, but considering the safety of the brothers and sisters, I agreed. After the leader had left, I thought to myself: “I was a leader for years and was always out preaching the gospel. Better to find a couple of ordinary believers to do this demeaning job of being a lookout. Why do I have to do it? You’re all in there holding a gathering while I’m out in the cold, risking danger. Isn’t this because I have no status? If I was a leader, I wouldn’t have to be on guard duty like this.” I suddenly realized that my desire for status was up to its old tricks again, so I hurriedly prayed to God, saying, “Dear God, I now have to do this demeaning duty and my desire for status has risen up again. Oh God, I don’t want to be bound by status again. Please guide me so I can cast off the fetters of status.” I then read this in God’s words: “**Some people**

particularly idolize Paul. They like to go out and give speeches and do work, they like to attend gatherings and preach, and they like people listening to them, worshiping them, and revolving around them. They like to have status in the minds of others, and they appreciate it when others value the image they present. Let us analyze their nature from these behaviors: What is their nature? If they really behave like this, then it is enough to show that they are arrogant and conceited. They do not worship God at all; they seek a higher status and wish to have authority over others, to possess them, and to have status in their minds. This is the classic image of Satan. The aspects of their nature that stand out are arrogance and conceit, an unwillingness to worship God, and a desire to be worshiped by others. Such behaviors can give you a very clear view into their nature” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. How to Know Man’s Nature). After reading God’s words, I realized I was always after high positions, always wanting others to look up to me and idolize me. I wanted a place in other people’s hearts, and in essence this meant I wanted to occupy other people’s hearts. I was competing with God for people! My nature was so arrogant! I thought about how Paul was always exalting and testifying to himself, making others admire and idolize him, which is why he said, “For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Philippians 1:21). This made most people admire and worship him, so much so that his place in people’s hearts even surpassed that of the Lord Jesus. Didn’t what I was thinking and pursuing back then make me just the same as Paul? I was indeed on the God-resisting path of the antichrists; I really had disgusted God and people, and I deserved to be punished. In the last days, God expresses the truth to cleanse and save people, yet after all those years of faith, I’d not made any effort to pursue the truth nor given any thought to seeking to change myself into someone who obeyed and

worshiped God. Instead, I used all my thought and energy on pursuing status. If I carried on that way, I'd be cursed and punished by God. What a fool I'd been!

I then read in God's words: **"People are created beings who have nothing worthy of boasting about. Since you are God's creatures, you must perform the duty of a creature. There are no other requirements of you. This is how you should pray: 'Oh God! Whether I have status or not, I now understand myself. If my status is high it is because of Your elevation, and if it is low it is because of Your ordination. Everything is in Your hands. I have neither any choices, nor any complaints. You ordained that I would be born in this country and among this people, and all that I should do is to be completely obedient under Your dominion because everything is within what You have ordained. I do not give thought to status; after all, I am but a creature. If You place me in the bottomless pit, in the lake of fire and brimstone, I am nothing but a creature. If You use me, I am a creature. If You perfect me, I am yet a creature. If You do not perfect me, I will still love You because I am no more than a creature. I am nothing more than a minuscule creature created by the Lord of creation, just one among all created humans. It was You who created me, and now You have once again placed me in Your hands to do with me as You will. I am willing to be Your tool and Your foil because everything is what You have ordained. No one can change it. All things and all events are in Your hands.' When the time comes that you will no longer give thought to status, then you will break free from it. Only then will you be able to confidently and boldly seek, and only then can your heart become free of any constraints"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Why Are You Unwilling to Be a Foil?). After reading God's words, I understood that if someone

has high status, then God has raised them up, and if someone has low status, then this is what God has predestined. However He treats people and no matter where He puts us, we should always submit, do our own duty well, and not complain. This is the reasonable thing to do, and is what a genuine created being does. When I understood this, I became willing to submit and practice the truth, and from then on, I devoted myself to being the lookout. I'd make sure I stood guard so that the leaders and deacons could hold their gathering in peace. The leader asked me to stand guard for gatherings a few more times after that, but I no longer thought about whether it was high or low status; I just felt very liberated and at peace.

Over those years, God arranged situations again and again to expose me and He used His words to judge and chastise me so that I'd really come to see how deeply I'd been corrupted by Satan, and how great my desire for status was. I also clearly recognized that status is something Satan uses to keep people chained: The more you pursue status, the more Satan harms you and toys with you, and the more you disobey and resist God. I also came to understand what people should pursue in their faith in God in order to be saved. Having had such a strong desire for status and such big ambitions, that I've been able to change as I now have, to obey God's orchestrations and arrangements, and do my duty obediently is all down to God's judgment and chastisement. God made such painstaking efforts on my behalf and I thank Almighty God for saving me from the bottom of my heart!

31. Sticking to My Duty

By Yangmu, South Korea

I used to feel so envious when I saw brothers and sisters performing, singing and dancing in praise of God. I dreamed of the day I could go on stage to sing and bear witness to God. I thought it would be such an honor! That day came sooner than I thought.

In May 2018, I joined rehearsals for Kingdom Anthem, a choral show. I'd never taken singing or dancing lessons, so practices were really hard for me at first. I was really nervous when I sang and I had a stiff look on my face, and I was always out of sync while dancing. I still didn't lose heart, though. I'd think about The Kingdom Anthem being testimony for all of humanity about God's coming and immediately feel so inspired that I'd just keep praying. I was determined to put my all into singing and dancing well. God guided me bit by bit, and after a few months I started to feel more comfortable with it all. I was also leading brothers and sisters in practicing their expressions. I started to feel quite pleased with myself, thinking, "My expressions and movements are really something now. I'll certainly be put in the very front when we film, and when the brothers and sisters from home see me in it they're going to be so excited, so happy. I bet they'll be envious, too, and look up to me." I felt so great every time I thought of that and I had boundless energy for my duty. Even when we rehearsed until I was soaked with sweat and sore, I still didn't relax. I was afraid that if I slacked, I wouldn't be put in front and then I'd have less of a chance to show myself. I knew I had to do my best no matter how difficult and exhausting it was. The director mapped out our positions on stage as filming approached. Excited, I opened up the list of performers and looked for my name, then saw I was in row seven. I couldn't believe my eyes for a

moment. Why was I put so far back? Had the director made a mistake? My expressions and movements were on point, and I'd even been helping brothers and sisters practice. I thought I really should be in the first few rows. How could I be in the back? If I didn't make it on screen, if there weren't any shots of me, the others wouldn't even see me. That thought left me really disgruntled. In rehearsals after that, I couldn't muster up any joy in my singing or energy in my dancing. I was always sullen, especially when I saw some of the sisters' expressions and movements were nothing special, but they were in the first three rows. I really didn't get it. How were they any better than me? Why had they been put in front, while I was stuck in the back? I was filled with jealousy and couldn't accept it. I did see that some brothers and sisters who were generally better in practice than I was were put even farther back, but they looked totally at ease during rehearsals as if that hadn't affected them at all. I was puzzled: Even in the back, they were obedient and actively did their duty, so why was it so hard for me, and why couldn't I submit? Was I being really unreasonable? I did feel some self-reproach at that point, but I still didn't seek the truth or reflect on myself. I still couldn't get over where I'd been placed in the lineup.

A few days later the director made some changes to the lineup. I felt a surge of secret delight and wondered whether I would be moved toward the front. But when I saw it, I really wanted to cry. I was put in the very last row and at the very edge where the camera could hardly see me. What I found even more unbelievable was that some sisters who hadn't been rehearsing for long were placed in front of me. I was in utter turmoil and felt knocked off-balance. I'd worked so hard practicing my expressions and movements so I could be in the film, so why had I been relegated to an obscure corner without the slightest chance to show my face? I'd just be a prop! What was the point in even being in the show? If I'd known before, I

wouldn't have worked so hard in rehearsals. I felt like I was falling apart and just couldn't accept this fact. Over the next few days of practice, I ended up spraining my ankle. I thought, "I can rest now that my ankle is sprained, and there's no need to run myself ragged every day. I'm in the back where no one can see me anyway. Why work so hard?" I started coming late and leaving early, and when rehearsals got intense, I'd rest in the wings. Seeing this, a few sisters reminded me, "We're about to film. If you don't spend these days practicing, you'll be out of sync with everyone else. We can't drag our feet." Hearing this was a bit upsetting and I did feel kind of bad. I knew that we'd be filming in just 20 days, so if I didn't get busy rehearsing, the whole project would be delayed. I would be causing a disturbance. I had this sudden sense of fear. How could I be so depraved? Only through reflection did I realize that I'd been making excuses and resisting, and I'd lost my drive for my duty ever since I'd been put toward the back and wouldn't have a chance to show off. I was just doing the bare minimum, going through the motions. I was resisting God and being antagonistic. My sprain was also getting worse and worse, which could have been God disciplining me. If I kept being so resistant, never mind whether I could show off or not, I might not be able to get up on stage, and then I'd even lose my duty. In my pain and self-reproach, I kneeled down in prayer to God that night. "Oh God, I've been really upset since I saw I was put in the back and I haven't been able to submit, full of complaints, and have been doing my duty poorly, lying down on the job. I see how rebellious I am, how I've disappointed You. God, please lead me out from this state."

I then read these words of God: **"As soon as it touches upon position, face, or reputation, everyone's heart leaps in anticipation, and each of you always wants to stand out, be famous, and be recognized. Everyone**

is unwilling to yield, always instead wishing to contend—even though contending is embarrassing and not allowed in God’s house. However, without contention, you still are not content. When you see someone stand out, you feel jealous, hatred, and that it is unfair. ‘Why can’t I stand out? Why is it always that person who gets to stand out, and it’s never my turn?’ You then feel some resentment. You try to repress it, but you cannot. You pray to God and feel better for a while, but then as soon as you encounter this sort of situation again, you cannot overcome it. Does this not display an immature stature? Is not a person’s falling into such states a trap? These are the shackles of Satan’s corrupt nature that bind humans. If a person has cast off these corrupt dispositions, is he not then free and liberated? Consider this: What sorts of changes must a person make if he wants to refrain from becoming ensnared in these conditions, be able to extricate himself from them, and become liberated from the vexations and bondage of these things? What must a person obtain before he is truly able to be free and liberated? On the one hand, he must see through things: Fame and fortune and positions are but tools and methods that Satan uses to corrupt people, to entrap them, to harm them, and to cause their depravity. In theory, you must first gain a clear understanding of this. Furthermore, you must learn to let go of these things and set them aside. ... Otherwise, the more you struggle, the more darkness will surround you, and the more jealousy and hatred you will feel, and your desire to obtain will only grow stronger. The stronger your desire to obtain, the less capable you will be to do so, and as you obtain less, your hatred will increase. As your hatred increases, you will grow darker inside. The darker you are inside, the more poorly you will perform your duty; the more poorly you perform your duty, the less useful you

will be. This is an interlinked, vicious cycle. If you can never perform your duty well, then, gradually, you will be eliminated” (The Word, Vol. 3.

The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Give Your True Heart to God, and You Can Obtain the Truth). This awakened me a bit. God’s words revealed my own state precisely. After I joined the choir group and saw I was becoming more familiar with the routines, and I was leading others to practice their expressions, I started to feel like I was performing better than them and that I’d be in the front for filming. I was bursting with energy for my duty when I thought I’d be filmed, that I could show off. I was happy to work hard and exhaust myself, and I just focused on practicing my expressions and movements. But when my position ended up farther and farther back, my hopes of showing off were dashed. I was resistant to the director’s arrangements and I refused to accept those in front. I was jealous of them. I misunderstood and complained, I felt it wasn’t fair, I tried to reason and butt heads with God, and became negative and slacked in my duty. I even regretted the effort I’d put into practicing. As I reflected on my motives and behavior, I saw that I wasn’t doing my duty out of consideration for God’s will or to bear witness to Him. Instead, I wanted that opportunity to stand out, to have others look up to me. Wasn’t I just fighting for my own reputation and status? I was so selfish and despicable! That chance to join the choir group was God elevating me, but, devoid of conscience and reason, I didn’t think of how to do my duty well and satisfy God. Instead I just fought to show off. I got upset and complained when I couldn’t show off. I fell into a darker and darker state. I ended up doing my duty poorly, and this disgusted God. Hadn’t I fallen into Satan’s web? I thought of all those brothers and sisters who did their duty behind the scenes, who didn’t get to go on stage, but they worked hard without complaint, sticking to their duties with their feet on the ground. I was nothing compared to them. I felt I

was ungrateful, and that I was so indebted to God. I didn't want to keep being so rebellious. I wanted to repent to God.

After that, I read these words from God: **“You must learn to let go and set aside these things, to recommend others, and to allow them to stand out. Do not struggle or rush to take advantage the moment you encounter an opportunity to stand out or obtain glory. You must learn to back off, but must not delay the performing of your duty. Be a person who works in quiet obscurity, and who does not show off to others while you loyally perform your duty. The more you let go of your prestige and status, and the more you let go of your own interests, the more peaceful you will become, and the more space will open up within your heart and the more your state will improve. The more you struggle and compete, the darker your state will be. If you do not believe it, try it and see! If you want to turn this sort of state around, and not be controlled by these things, then you must first set them aside and give them up”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Give Your True Heart to God, and You Can Obtain the Truth). God's words gave me a path of practice. Whenever I wanted to show off again, I had to pray to God and forsake myself, let go of my own desires and think more of how I could do my duty in line with God's requirements, and get my movements right and sing my song well. This was what I needed to do. I realized that my chance to have a part in The Kingdom Anthem was me doing the duty of a created being, whether I was in the front or in the back. God doesn't decide whether people are devoted in their duty based on where they stand in a lineup, but on their sincerity, and whether they practice the truth and submit to God. I felt so much more at ease after understanding God's will, and I said this prayer: “God, I don't want to rebel against You anymore. No matter where

my place is, even if it's the very back where no one can see me, I want to do my duty well to satisfy You!"

In rehearsals after that, I was always in the back two rows. Sometimes it did occur to me that I'd never get into a shot that way, that no one would ever admire me, and I'd feel a bit disappointed. But at those times I hurriedly prayed to God and asked Him to quiet my heart, and I pondered how to express what God required with every single line I sang, and how to dance energetically, according to the choreography. When I started to put my heart into these things, I felt so close to God and I didn't care where I was placed. Incredibly, as we got closer to filming, I kept getting shifted toward the front and I was given some small scenes to shoot, too. I thanked God for giving me that opportunity to practice. Over those several days of shooting the scenes, I held on to my sense of gratitude. With every take, I focused on putting my heart into it so that I wouldn't have any regrets in my duty. For the last scene, I was put in the first row with the camera very close to me. I simply couldn't believe it. I felt it was such an honor. I thanked God over and over and was determined to do a good job. Just as I was happily walking up to the first row, all those lights were shining on me and the cameras were pointed at me. A sister rushed over to straighten my clothing, touch up my makeup, and fix my hair. I suddenly had this feeling like I was the focus of attention, that everyone was looking at me, and I couldn't suppress my excitement. Even in my dreams I never imagined being in the first row. If the shot turned out well, lots of people would see me and I'd really make a name for myself. The idea was really growing on me. The feeling was indescribable. At that thought I suddenly realized that I wasn't in the right state, and that I was wanting to show off again. I lost no time in praying to God and forsaking myself, but I still couldn't tamp down my incorrect thinking and I couldn't calm down. We did two or three takes

one after another, but I couldn't get into it. The director then reminded us to get into the right frame of mind. I started to worry that the director had seen my expressions were off and would put me in the back again. I worried that I would lose that opportunity to show myself off. But I realized I couldn't always think of my own interests, and I had to focus on how to adjust my state so I could do my duty well. There was this internal battle raging between wanting to do my duty well and worrying about losing my chance to show off. It left me feeling incredibly nervous. We did five takes in a row, but I still couldn't get into it, and I looked really stiff. I saw the other sisters all talking excitedly about what they'd learned after the shoot, and some were so moved they were crying, but I couldn't get my spirits up. I felt so dejected and made a quick exit.

Walking back, I felt so guilty about having done poorly in the filming. All the others had given God their honest hearts and innocent smiles, but I was obsessed with showing off. My performance wasn't good enough to bear witness to God at all, and God couldn't approve of my duty. At that point I really wanted to have a good cry. I said to God, "God, I regret this last scene. I really don't want to show off anymore, and would like to be at the back of the stage, in a corner where no one, not even the camera, can see me. As long as I have a simple, honest heart to genuinely sing for You, I'll feel happy and at peace, and I'll never feel so accused again. But it's too late, and I can't make up for what I owed." The more I thought about it the more upset I got, feeling such regret in how I'd performed my duty.

Later, I quieted my heart and started to think it over. Why was my desire to show off and to stand out so strong that forsaking the flesh and practicing the truth became so difficult? I read this in God's words: **"What you like, what you focus on, what you worship, what you envy, and what you think about in your heart every day are all representative of**

your nature. It is enough to prove that your nature is fond of unrighteousness, and in serious situations, your nature is evil and incurable. You should analyze your nature in this way; that is, examine what you are fond of and what you forsake in your life. You might be good to someone for a time, but this does not prove that you are fond of them. What you are truly fond of is precisely what is in your nature; even if your bones were broken, you would still enjoy it and could never forsake it. This is not easy to change” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of

Christ of the Last Days. What Should Be Known About Transforming One’s Disposition). **“In addition to unearthing the things people are fond of in their natures, other aspects pertaining to their natures also need to be unearthed. For example, people’s viewpoints on things, people’s methods and goals in life, people’s life values and views on life, as well as views on all things relating to truth. These are all things deep within people’s souls and they have a direct relationship with the transformation of disposition”**

(The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. What Should Be Known About Transforming One’s Disposition). God’s words helped me understand that human thinking, preferences, and pursuits all come from our nature, and they’re controlled by our nature, too. Then I asked myself what I had really been focused on and seeking that whole time in my duty. When my place on stage kept getting pushed up toward the front and I was in more and more shots, what I thought about most was the chance to finally be in front, to show myself, and to be the focus of others’ envy and esteem. Especially for the last scene when I was put in front, I felt like I was some kind of star. It felt like such an accomplishment that I couldn’t control my desire to show off, to show my best face for the camera, to give the brothers and sisters who knew me a pleasant surprise, and give myself a wonderful memory that

would last forever. I saw how much I treasured reputation and status, and that it had burrowed so deeply into my heart.

Afterward, I read this in God's words: **"A corrupt satanic disposition is very deeply rooted in people; it becomes their life. What exactly do people seek and wish to gain? Under the driving force of a corrupt satanic disposition, what are people's ideals, hopes, ambitions, and life goals and directions? Do they not run contrary to positive things? Firstly, people always want to have renown or be celebrities; they wish to gain great fame and prestige, and to bring honor to their ancestors. Are these positive things? These are not at all in line with positive things; moreover, they run counter to the law of God's having dominion over the fate of mankind. Why would I say that? What kind of person does God want? Does He want a person of greatness, a celebrity, a noble person, or a world-shaking person? (No.) So, then, what kind of person does God want? He wants a person with their feet firmly on the ground who seeks to be a qualified creature of God, who can fulfill the duty of a creature, and who can keep to a human's place"**

(The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Corrupt Dispositions Can Only Be Resolved by Seeking the Truth and Relying on God). **"You are always seeking greatness, nobility, and dignity; you always seek exaltation. How does God feel when He sees this? He loathes it, and does not want to look upon it. The more you pursue things like greatness; nobility; and being superior to others, distinguished, outstanding, and noteworthy, the more disgusting God finds you. Do not be someone whom God finds disgusting! So, how can this be achieved? By doing things in a down-to-earth way while standing in man's position. Do not entertain idle dreams, do not seek fame or to stand out from your peers, and moreover, do not try to be a person of greatness who surpasses all**

others, who is superior among men and makes others worship them. That is the path Satan walks; God does not want such created beings. If, in the end, once all of God's work is done, there are still people who pursue these things, then there is only one outcome for them: to be eliminated" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The Proper Fulfillment of Duty Requires Harmonious Cooperation). God's words were a real wake-up call for me. I reflected on why I loved to show off so much, why I was so vain. It was all from being educated and corrupted by Satan. Its poisons like "Stand out above the rest, and bring honor to your ancestors" and "Man struggles upwards; water flows downwards" had really seeped into me, giving me the wrong outlook on life. I looked at seeking reputation and status and living better than others as positive things. I took them as life goals. No matter what I was doing, I wanted to show off, to have others look up to me and envy me. I felt that would be living better than others, that it would be honorable. So I had a great love for reputation and status. I thought about how I'd always wanted to excel before in school and in interactions with others. I wanted to be ahead of others, to be in the limelight. Whenever someone started to take notice of me, I'd feel incredibly pleased. When I was unnoticed or of no consequence in any group of people, I couldn't stand it. I wanted to fight for a place, and failing in that was upsetting. I was always living by these satanic poisons, always wanting others to look up to me. These things were like shackles binding me, controlling my thoughts, making me see being in a film to bear witness to God as my own personal stage to display myself. I was treating my duty like a springboard to satisfying my own desires. There was nothing in my heart but how to stick out, how to shine. I gave no thought to how to do my duty well or satisfy God. I saw that with my satanic toxins and dispositions unresolved, not only was it impossible for me to do my duty well and

satisfy God, but ultimately I'd be eliminated by God because I rebelled against Him and resisted Him.

I later read this in God's words: **“What God requires of people is not the ability to complete a certain number of tasks or accomplish any great undertakings, nor does He need them to pioneer any great undertakings. What God wants is for people to be able to do all they can in a down-to-earth way, and live in accordance with His words. God does not need you to be great or honorable, nor does He need you to bring about any miracles, nor does He want to see any pleasant surprises in you. He does not need such things. All God needs is for you to listen to His words and, once you have heard them, to take them to heart and heed them as you practice in a down-to-earth manner, so that God's words may become what you live out, and become your life. Thus, God will be satisfied”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The Proper Fulfillment of Duty Requires Harmonious Cooperation).

I saw that God's will is for us to pursue the truth and be totally honest people, to submit to His rule and arrangements, and put our all into our duties. Working toward these goals will satisfy Him. I never understood God's will before, but just wholeheartedly pursued reputation and status. As a result, I couldn't do my duty well, which disappointed God. I was so corrupt, but He still didn't give up on me. Time after time, He revealed my incorrect perspectives on pursuit by adjusting my placement on stage so that I could see my corrupt satanic disposition, turn from my course, and change. God's love really moved me. I said this prayer to Him: “God, I don't want to seek to stand out or be looked up to anymore. Those pursuits just bring me pain and make me unable to satisfy You in my duty, leaving me so guilty. From now on I only wish to practice according to Your words. No matter what position I have, whether I can show myself off or not, all I want is to sing in praise of You

with a genuine heart of submission to You, to do my duty to satisfy You.” In our retakes after that, sometimes I was moved back, sometimes I was moved forward, and sometimes I was needed in rehearsal but not for filming. It did affect me a little emotionally, but I was able to let go of my own desires by praying to God and reading His words to manage my mindset. Sometimes I saw some sisters impacted by having their place changed and they weren’t doing well in their duty. I was able to find some relevant words of God in time and link that to my own experience to help them. Doing my duty that way really put me at ease and it was so meaningful! The director later had me go up to the front row again, but I wasn’t trying to show off like before. I felt I should fulfill my duty and bear witness in every single scene. I focused on singing well and on doing my duty as I should. I remember in one scene when I was in the very back, we sang this from God’s words: **“Raise your triumphant banner to celebrate God! Sing your triumphant song of victory to spread God’s holy name!”** I thought about how deeply I’d been corrupted by Satan, seeking reputation and status, that I’d failed to do my duty well to satisfy God, how I’d really hurt Him. That day, I felt I had to praise God from my heart, offer up my best song to Him so that Satan would be shamed and defeated! When I was singing in praise of God on stage with that kind of attitude, I felt a peace and enjoyment I’d never experienced before. I also felt such a sense of pride!

The Kingdom Anthem, large-scale choral work, was online before long. All of us, brothers and sisters, watched the video excitedly. Seeing so many of God’s chosen standing before the Mount of Olives proudly singing **“The multitudes cheer God, the multitudes praise God”** really shook me, and I was so moved I couldn’t help but shed tears of gratitude. Thinking back over everything that happened, I saw that from being so affected by

my position at first that I couldn't put my heart into my duty, to ultimately being unaffected by reputation and status whether my place was in the front or in the back, but just taking the place of a created being, freely singing and bearing witness to God, that was all the fruit of God's work in me. Thanks be to God!

32. My Spirit Liberated

By Mibu, Spain

“In his life, if man wishes to be cleansed and achieve changes in his disposition, if he wishes to live out a life of meaning and fulfill his duty as a creature, then he must accept God’s chastisement and judgment, and must not allow God’s discipline and God’s smiting to depart from him, in order that he may free himself from the manipulation and influence of Satan, and live in the light of God. Know that God’s chastisement and judgment is the light, and the light of man’s salvation, and that there is no better blessing, grace or protection for man” (Follow the Lamb and Sing New Songs, God’s Chastisement and Judgment Is the Light of Man’s Salvation). Singing this hymn of God’s words reminds me of an experience I had a few years ago.

In October 2016, a music video with singing and dancing that I’d helped choreograph was put online. The brothers and sisters really liked it, and they recommended that I manage the church’s dance team. I was really excited and said a silent prayer to God that I’d definitely do this duty well and produce more videos to bear witness to Him. Before long, the dance team’s work started picking up. Brothers and sisters really looked up to me, and they came to me for help with any dancing difficulties they had. This really fed my vanity, and I felt like I was an indispensable talent in the church. Before long, the church leader arranged for Sister Ye to come work with me. I was really happy about it, thinking, “Sister Ye has professional dance experience, too, and she excels at different dance styles than I do. We can make up for what the other lacks. We’ll definitely do well in our duty.” After some time, we were getting ready to film a music video, and Sister Ye’s ideas for the choreography were more developed, more insightful than

mine. The brothers and sisters all liked them. I was not too pleased about this, and wondered, “What will the others think of me? Will they think I don’t match up to Sister Ye? If she surpasses me, will I still be able to play a major role in the team?” It particularly bothered me when I saw others going to talk to Sister Ye whenever they had a problem. I was the one in charge, but they sought her out whenever they had problems. Didn’t that mean she was better than me? I felt I couldn’t be outdone by her, that in our next program I had to make a really good show so that everyone saw I was just as good as her.

Sister Ye and I later split up our tasks to accommodate work needs. I was in charge of a music video, while she was in charge of a stage production. I was secretly pleased. When we’d worked together before, I felt overshadowed, so I felt I had to seize that chance to make everyone see I was more capable than her. I put in extra hours on research and choreography so I could do a great job on the music video, but when I saw that Sister Ye was nearly done with her dance production while I hadn’t even finished my choreography, I was as anxious as could be. Trying to pick up the pace and improve the quality, I started getting really demanding of brothers and sisters in our rehearsals. I once chided a brother with a scolding tone when I saw him do a few dance moves wrong, afraid that if he didn’t dance well, it would impact the program and then I wouldn’t get ahead of Sister Ye. Before filming, a brother pointed out that there wasn’t enough dancing in the intro. I thought he was right, but at that moment I couldn’t think of what to add, so he suggested that I go discuss it with Sister Ye. I really wasn’t happy to hear this. Wouldn’t going talk to her at such a critical juncture make me look less capable than her? If Sister Ye got involved, then who would take final credit? I’d spent so much time and energy on it, and I was about to finish the final product. There was no way I

was going to ask her. So I said, “Let’s not get tripped up on these little details now. Once it’s on film we can take a look at how it turns out overall.” The leader later watched our music video and said it didn’t reach the standard of bearing witness for God, and it had to be redone. I was so upset to hear this—it was like a knife had been put through my heart. I thought, “Now I’ve really been humiliated. The others will all see me for what I am. They’ll definitely think I’m not as good as Sister Ye and that I’m not capable in my work. How will I keep a foothold in the team from now on?” Over those few days, I couldn’t think about anything except my face and status. I couldn’t sleep at night, I dozed off in gatherings, and I didn’t put my heart into my duty.

One day, my leader came to fellowship with me. Seeing that I totally lacked understanding of myself, she exposed and dealt with me, saying I’d become jealous of someone else’s talent to protect my own name and position, that I hadn’t considered the church’s work at all, and I was selfish and despicable. She told me to really reflect on myself, and she read this passage of God’s words to me: **“As soon as it touches upon position, face, or reputation, everyone’s heart leaps in anticipation, and each of you always wants to stand out, be famous, and be recognized. Everyone is unwilling to yield, always instead wishing to contend—even though contending is embarrassing and not allowed in God’s house. However, without contention, you still are not content. When you see someone stand out, you feel jealous, hatred, and that it is unfair. ‘Why can’t I stand out? Why is it always that person who gets to stand out, and it’s never my turn?’ You then feel some resentment. You try to repress it, but you cannot. You pray to God and feel better for a while, but then as soon as you encounter this sort of situation again, you cannot overcome it. Does this not display an immature stature? Is not a person’s falling**

into such states a trap? These are the shackles of Satan's corrupt nature that bind humans. ... the more you struggle, the more darkness will surround you, and the more jealousy and hatred you will feel, and your desire to obtain will only grow stronger. The stronger your desire to obtain, the less capable you will be to do so, and as you obtain less, your hatred will increase. As your hatred increases, you will grow darker inside. The darker you are inside, the more poorly you will perform your duty; the more poorly you perform your duty, the less useful you will be. This is an interlinked, vicious cycle. If you can never perform your duty well, then, gradually, you will be eliminated" (The

Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Give Your True Heart to God, and You Can Obtain the Truth). These words of God were a real blow for me. What God revealed was precisely my own state. I'd been constantly jealous of Sister Ye's abilities, just struggling for name and gain. It was so disgusting to God. I thought back on how I'd been jealous ever since Sister Ye joined the team and I saw how skilled she was. I'd been afraid the others would look up to her and look down on me, and my position would be threatened. So I started covertly pitting myself against her, trying to think of ways to prove myself. When I saw that the choreography of her dance program was progressing more quickly than mine, I became overly demanding of brothers and sisters so I wouldn't fall behind her. It was very clear that there were some things Sister Ye and I should have discussed, but I found excuses to keep her out of it, afraid that she'd steal all the credit. As a result, some issues weren't dealt with in time, and even after brothers and sisters had put in all that time and energy, it turned out to not be good enough to serve as a testimony for God. When the church leader arranged for Sister Ye to work with me in my duty, it was so we could bring different strengths to the table and choreograph dances well to bear witness to God,

but I wasn't considerate of God's will at all. I constantly vied for name and gain and disrupted the church's work. I had done nothing but evil and opposed God. This thought frightened me a bit and I was full of regret. I prayed to God, and no longer wanted to be jealous of others' success, or vie for name and gain. I wanted to repent to God, work well with Sister Ye, and do our duty with one accord.

In the choreographies we worked on together after that, my attitude improved somewhat. There were times I still felt jealous of her, but I knew that I should uphold the church's work, not my own personal interests. I consciously forsook the flesh and set myself aside, thinking of how to work with my sister to improve the program. When we ran into problems or difficulties, we often fellowshiped together, and we opened up about any corruption we showed, jointly seeking the truth to resolve it. After that, I saw God's guidance and blessings—the dance was choreographed really quickly. I also experienced the sense of ease and release that comes from practicing the truth.

A few months later Sister Ye and I were working together again to plan a stage performance. Things went really quickly at first, and brothers and sisters liked the way we choreographed the dances. I was feeling really pleased with myself. One day, the leader asked how things were going with the choreography, and I happily responded, "We're making great progress." Then a sister chimed in, "Sister Ye has great ideas, and the general framework is pretty good, too." Feeling annoyed, I thought, "Why would you say that? Now everyone knows the ideas for the dance came from Sister Ye, and they'll think I'm not as good as her. I have to think of a way to achieve something myself, otherwise what will the leader and the brothers and sisters think of me?" Once, during choreography, I thought of a novel, acrobatic move. Excited, I thought, "I excel at acrobatics. As long

as we rehearse this well, not only will it add a bright spot to the dance, but everyone will see my strengths. Then everyone will look up to me.” But the next day when I was teaching that move to the brothers and sisters, they gave feedback that the pace was too fast, that it was too hard. A sister warned me that evening, “It’s easy for people to injure themselves with that move. I don’t think we should practice it.” I was really concerned that they might replace it with another move, and then how could I compare with Sister Ye when the time came? So I encouraged everyone to practice it a few more times, and I only gave up when several sisters had hurt themselves from falling. I was upset and felt bad, so I apologized to the team and modified the move, but I still didn’t reflect on myself in light of it. In no time at all, filming was about to start. Sister Ye and I both participated in the performance. During filming, I felt that I hadn’t danced well while I was in the shot, so I asked the director for several retakes. I later saw that nearly all of the shots Sister Ye was in were head-on, but my only close-up was from the side. I was crestfallen. In the following filming sessions, I just couldn’t muster up a smile and my dancing was lifeless. I was just obsessed with how I could dance better than Sister Ye. I didn’t have the heart to watch the dance scenes I was supposed to be checking, and I didn’t care if the performance bore witness for God or not. And so, when the video came out, everyone said that the dancing was too stiff, too inhibited, and not only was it not good enough to testify to God, but it was shameful to God. Later, the leader said I’d been stuck in a state of vying for name and gain and had achieved nothing in my duty, so she dismissed me from my position of responsibility. I was so upset. At first, I’d just wanted to do my duty well and satisfy God, but since I was working for my own selfish ends, the programs I put together not only couldn’t testify to God, but they shamed

Him. This was a transgression. I had lost my chance to do my duty through dance. I had a really long cry.

Afterward, I kept thinking over and over, “I know very well that fighting for name and gain isn’t right, so why can’t I stop myself from going after those things, time after time? What’s the real reason?” I read these words from God once when I was doing devotionals: **“Satan uses fame and gain to control man’s thoughts, until all people can think of is fame and gain. They struggle for fame and gain, suffer hardships for fame and gain, endure humiliation for fame and gain, sacrifice everything they have for fame and gain, and they will make any judgment or decision for the sake of fame and gain. In this way, Satan binds people with invisible shackles, and they have neither the strength nor the courage to throw them off. They unknowingly bear these shackles and trudge ever onward with great difficulty. For the sake of this fame and gain, mankind shuns God and betrays Him and becomes increasingly wicked. In this way, therefore, one generation after another is destroyed in the midst of Satan’s fame and gain. Looking now at Satan’s actions, are its sinister motives not utterly detestable? Maybe today you still cannot see through Satan’s sinister motives because you think one cannot live without fame and gain. You think that if people leave fame and gain behind, they will no longer be able to see the way ahead, no longer be able to see their goals, that their futures will become dark, dim and gloomy. But, slowly, you will all one day recognize that fame and gain are monstrous shackles that Satan uses to bind man. When that day comes, you will thoroughly resist Satan’s control and thoroughly resist the shackles Satan uses to bind you. When the time comes that you wish to throw off all the things Satan has instilled in you, you will then make a clean break with Satan**

and you will truly loathe all that Satan has brought to you. Only then will mankind have a real love and yearning for God” (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique VI). God’s words revealed Satan’s tactics and evil intentions in corrupting mankind. It uses fame and gain to corrupt and control people so that they become more and more depraved and corrupt, even doing evil and opposing God. I’d been educated and influenced by Satan ever since I was little. “Stand out above the rest, and bring honor to your ancestors,” and “A man leaves his name behind wherever he stays, just as a goose utters its cry wherever it flies.” These satanic philosophies were deeply rooted within me. No matter what group I was in, I wanted to be exceptional, to be admired and praised. Seeing someone who excelled made me jealous and I tried to think of everything to get ahead, always struggling for name and gain, made miserable by Satan’s trickery. My disposition also became more and more arrogant and vicious. Thinking back on the choreography, I’d wanted to outdo Sister Ye with my technical skills, but I didn’t care if the performers could physically handle it, which ended up with several sisters getting injured during the rehearsals. While we were filming, I wanted to use my only close-up to show that I was better than Sister Ye, so when my dance moves in the shot didn’t look perfect enough to me, I had the director do lots of retakes, holding up the work. And finally, when I saw that only the side of my face had ended up on film while nearly all of Sister Ye’s shots were from the front, I was filled with resentment and lived in a state of negativity and resistance, and didn’t have the heart to dance well to bear witness to God. As a result, my dancing shamed God. My choreography wasn’t to bear witness to God, but to personally show off. My fight for name and gain seriously hindered the church’s work and hurt my brothers and sisters. My behavior was so disgusting, so odious to God! These words from God then came to mind:

“This ‘evil way’ does not refer to a handful of evil acts, but to the evil source from which people’s behavior springs” (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique II). God’s words helped me realize that I hadn’t been removed from my duty because I’d done a few bad things. It had happened because the root, the starting point of my actions, and the path I was on, were all evil. Ever since Sister Ye had started working with me, I’d been jealous of her, fighting for my interests. I’d been carrying out my own personal enterprise. I’d simply been doing evil and opposing God. At this thought, I became filled with dread. I saw that pursuing name and status was a path in opposition to God, and if I didn’t repent, I’d ultimately be eliminated and punished. I felt such terrible regret. I wept bitterly and prayed to God: “Oh God! I’ve been dismissed from my duty. This is Your righteous disposition being revealed to me and it’s Your protection for me. Thank You for arranging this situation to stop me in my evil tracks in time. I want to repent to You.”

In the days that followed, I preached the gospel in the church while also doing devotionals and self-reflection. Every time I thought about my antics in my duty just for name and gain, I felt nothing but remorse. I hated myself for not treasuring the opportunity God had given me in the dance team. When I watched those music videos, I wanted so badly to go back and start from scratch, but I knew that was impossible. All I could do was perform my gospel duty diligently to make up for my past transgressions. To my surprise, the church leader had me join the dance team again just a month later. I was so moved at this news that I just couldn’t stop my tears, and I resolved to really treasure this chance, to stop going after name and gain, to get on well working with brothers and sisters, and do my duty well to repay God’s love.

After rejoining the team, in one of our rehearsals, Sister Ye mentioned that a dance move that I'd taught brothers and sisters wasn't standard. I felt really ashamed in that moment, thinking, "How could you criticize me in front of the others that way? Now they're definitely going to think I'm not up to your level. I can't have them looking down on me. I'm professional too, you know, and I've noticed your dance moves are not perfect, either." I wanted to scrap the moves that she had choreographed. Then, I realized that I was thinking of my own name and gain again, so I prayed to God in my heart. I thought of these words of God after my prayer: **"If the more crucial a moment it is, the more able people are to submit and let go of their self-interests, vanity, and pride, and perform their duties properly, only then will they be remembered by God. Those are all good deeds! Regardless of what people do, which is more important—their vanity and pride, or God's glory? (God's glory.) Which are more important—your responsibilities, or your own interests? Fulfilling your responsibilities is what is most important, and you are duty-bound to them. ... you give first priority to your own duty, to the will of God, to bearing testimony for Him, and to your own responsibilities. This is such a great way of bearing testimony, and it brings shame upon Satan!"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Gaining God and the Truth Is the Happiest of Things). A light went on within me. Wasn't God testing me with this situation? Whenever there's a conflict between my personal interests and the interests of God's house, I should focus on meeting God's will and practicing the truth to humiliate Satan. Once I calmed down and thought about it, I saw I really hadn't taught brothers and sisters the move correctly. Sister Ye had been a little direct and that was embarrassing for me, but she was right, and I knew I should accept her suggestion. After putting myself aside and correcting my motives, Sister Ye and I very

quickly finished the choreography together. I also felt a sense of ease and peace by doing my duty that way.

That experience truly showed me that God's judgment and chastisement are His love and salvation for me. God's judgment and chastisement woke me up and made me see the essence and the dangerous consequences of going after name and gain. That righted my wrong perspectives, and I started pursuing the truth and doing my duty with my feet firmly planted on the ground, living out a human likeness. Thanks be to God!

33. The Fetters of Fame and Gain

By Jieli, Spain

In 2015, I was chosen to be a church leader in the annual election. I was really excited, thinking that being elected as a leader out of dozens of brothers and sisters must mean that I was better than the others. In my duty from then on, brothers and sisters would come to me for fellowship when they had difficulties with life entry, and team leaders would discuss issues they encountered in the church's work with me. I couldn't help but have this feeling of superiority. I walked around arrogantly, with my chest puffed out, and I was bursting with confidence when fellowshipping in gatherings. After a while, I noticed that Sister Liu, a co-worker, was of good caliber, her fellowship on the truth was very clear, and she could grasp the root of people's problems to resolve them. She also pointed out paths of practice, and everyone wanted to hear her fellowship. I both admired and envied her. But I didn't want to be outdone, so I carefully prepared before every gathering, racking my brains to think of how to fellowship more comprehensively and with more light so I'd appear better than her. When I saw brothers and sisters nodding in agreement when I was finished with fellowship, I'd feel very pleased with myself and had a sense of accomplishment. Later on, I discovered that my co-worker Brother Zheng had quite a bit of professional knowledge on movies and that he was good with computers. Brothers and sisters doing filming duty would often discuss related matters with him, and as a church leader I just didn't have anything to add. I felt like a fifth wheel, and that left me really disgruntled. I thought that by seeking out Brother Zheng whenever they had a problem, they must think I didn't match up to him. I figured it would be great if I knew something about movies, too, then the brothers and sisters would discuss

their issues with me. I started getting up early and staying up late to research and learn about how to make movies so I could know more. I totally disregarded all the issues in the church as well as brothers' and sisters' states. After a little while, problems started appearing in the work of several teams that I just couldn't resolve no matter how I fellowshiped or held gatherings. Since brothers' and sisters' states hadn't been resolved, film production progress was hindered and one problem after another was cropping up. I was under so much pressure I could hardly breathe. I felt tormented. I worried about what the others would think of me, if they'd think I was totally lacking capability as a leader and I wasn't qualified to do that duty. It looked like I wouldn't be able to hold on to my position as a leader. I became more negative as I thought about it. I felt like a deflated balloon and didn't have the energy I had before. Living in negativity and slacking off in my duty, I eventually lost the work of the Holy Spirit. Since I wasn't achieving anything in my duty, I was replaced. At that moment, I felt like I'd totally lost face and I wanted the earth to swallow me up. I was also wondering, "Will the brothers and sisters say I was a false leader who didn't do practical work?" I got more upset the more I dwelled on it.

I lay in bed tossing and turning that night, unable to sleep. I called out to God in prayer time after time, asking Him to guide me to know my own state. I then read these words of God: **"In your seeking, you have too many individual notions, hopes, and futures. The current work is in order to deal with your desire for status and your extravagant desires. Hopes, status, and notions are all classic representations of satanic disposition. The reason that these things exist in people's hearts is entirely because Satan's poison is always corroding people's thoughts, and always people are unable to shake off these temptations of Satan. They are living in the midst of sin yet do not believe it to be sin, and**

still they think: ‘We believe in God, so He must bestow blessings on us and arrange everything for us appropriately. We believe in God, so we must be superior to others, and we must have more status and more of a future than anyone else. Since we believe in God, He must give us limitless blessings. Otherwise, it wouldn’t be called believing in God.’ ... The more you seek in this way, the less you will reap. The greater a person’s desire for status, the more seriously they will have to be dealt with and the more they will have to undergo great refinement. Such people are worthless! They must be dealt with and judged adequately in order for them to thoroughly let go of these things. If you pursue this way until the end, you will reap nothing. Those who do not pursue life cannot be transformed, and those who do not thirst for the truth cannot gain the truth. You do not focus on pursuing personal transformation and entry, but focus instead on extravagant desires and things that constrain your love for God and prevent you from drawing close to Him. Can those things transform you? Can they bring you into the kingdom?’” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Why Are You Unwilling to Be a Foil?). I reflected on my recent state after reading this. Since taking on the duty of a leader, I’d been doing nothing but pursuing name and status and wanting to be above others. When I saw Sister Liu’s fellowship on the truth was better than mine, I was afraid she’d outdo me. I thought about how to fellowship better than her so that the others would admire and praise me. When I saw Brother Zheng had professional skills and lots of brothers and sisters talked to him about issues in their duties, I became jealous and rejected him. I worked hard to equip myself with knowledge to get ahead of him, and even ignored problems within teams. When I couldn’t resolve brothers’ and sisters’ issues, I didn’t lean on God, or seek the truth with brothers and sisters to find solutions through fellowship. I was just

worrying about losing my status, afraid that I wouldn't be able to hold on to my position as a leader if I didn't do my duty well. Then I finally realized I wasn't doing my duty out of consideration of God's will at all, but to satisfy my wild ambition to be better than others, to lord over others. Brothers and sisters put their trust in me and elected me as a church leader, but I didn't consider the church's work or their life entry at all. I wasn't really shouldering my duty or being responsible, and this ended up harming the church's work. I was so selfish and despicable. I wasn't doing my duty—I was doing evil and resisting God! I regretted not being on the right path in my faith, but always fighting for name and gain, disgusting God. Being dismissed from my duty was God's righteous judgment and chastisement. He wasn't eliminating me, but had me replaced so I would reflect on my behavior. That was God protecting and saving me! My state gradually improved through a period of devotionals and reflection, so the church leader arranged for me to take on routine duties. I was really grateful to God for giving me that chance, and I quietly resolved that I would certainly treasure that duty, and stop pursuing name and status on a path in opposition to God.

After that experience, I thought I could let go of my desire for name and status a bit, but I was too deeply corrupted by Satan. The corrupt disposition can't be resolved with just a little understanding and reflection, so God once again set up a situation to expose me and save me.

One day a few months later, the church leader told us to select a team leader. As soon as I heard this, I started weighing it up: "Will I have a shot at being elected as team leader? I'm a pretty capable worker, but I don't have any professional skills, so my chances probably aren't that great." Then I considered a few other brothers and sisters in the team. Brother Zhang excelled with professional skills and his fellowship on the truth was

practical, plus he had a sense of justice and he was able to uphold the church's work. Overall, it looked like he was more likely to be chosen. I thought about how I used to delegate work to Brother Zhang when I was a church leader, but if he were elected as the team leader, he'd be telling me what to do. Wouldn't that make me look inferior to him? This thought made me really uncomfortable. When the election day came, I couldn't help but get nervous, and an inner battle commenced: "Who should I vote for? Should I vote for Brother Zhang?" I thought about how most brothers and sisters discussed any difficulties in their duties with him, and people in other teams also discussed their work with him all the time—it made him look so good. If he became team leader, wouldn't he be on a higher rung than me? At that, I didn't want to vote for him anymore, but I lacked professional knowledge and I wasn't qualified to be the team leader. I felt really dejected and aggrieved, and hated that I didn't know more about the work. Just then, a terrible thought popped into my mind: "If I can't be the team leader, I'll make sure you can't either." And so, I voted for Brother Wu, who didn't have as much professional knowledge. To my surprise, Brother Zhang was still the one voted in. I wasn't pleased to see things turn out that way, but I immediately had an uneasy feeling, like I'd done something shameful. I later read these words of God: **"If some people see someone better than they are, they suppress them, start a rumor about them, or employ some unscrupulous means so that other people don't look highly upon them, and that no one is any better than anyone else, then this is the corrupt disposition of arrogance and self-rightness, as well as crookedness, deceitfulness and insidiousness, and these people stop at nothing to achieve their aims. They live like this and yet still think they're great and that they're good people. However, do they have God-fearing hearts? First of all, to speak from the perspective of**

the natures of these matters, are not people who act this way simply doing as they please? Do they consider the interests of God's family? They think only of their own feelings and they want only to achieve their own aims, regardless of the loss suffered by the work of God's family. Not only are people like this arrogant and self-right, they are also selfish and contemptible; they are utterly inconsiderate of God's intention, and people like this, without a shadow of a doubt, do not possess God-fearing hearts. This is why they do whatever they want and act wantonly, without any sense of blame, without any trepidation, without any apprehension or worry, and without considering the consequences. This is what they often do, and how they have always behaved. What are the consequences such people face? They will be in trouble, right? To put it lightly, such people are far too jealous and have too strong a desire for personal fame and status; they are too deceitful and treacherous. To put it more harshly, the essential problem is that such people's hearts are not even the slightest bit God-fearing. They do not fear God, they believe themselves to be of utmost importance, and they regard every aspect of themselves as being higher than God and higher than the truth. In their hearts, God is the least worthy of mention and the most insignificant, and God does not have any status in their hearts at all. Have those who have no place for God in their hearts, and who do not revere God, attained entry into the truth? (No.) So, when they typically go around merrily keeping themselves busy and exerting quite a lot of energy, what are they doing? Such people even claim to have abandoned everything to expend for God and suffered a great deal, but actually, the motive, principle, and objective of all their actions are to benefit themselves; they are only trying to protect all of their own interests. Would you or

would you not say that this sort of person is terrible? What sort of person is one who does not revere God? Are they not arrogant? Are they not Satan? What kinds of things do not revere God? Leaving aside the animals, all those that do not revere God include demons, Satan, the archangel, and those who contend with God” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The Five States Necessary to Be on the Right Track in One’s Faith). These words cut me to the quick. Thinking back on my thoughts and deeds during the election process, I felt like I couldn’t show my face. I’d voted according to my personal motives, to protect my position and prestige, without accepting God’s scrutiny and without any reverence for God at all. I knew Brother Zhang was skilled, his fellowship on the truth was practical, and him becoming the team leader would benefit everyone’s life entry and the church’s work. But I was jealous, afraid that he’d be above me as team leader, so I intentionally didn’t vote for him. I had gone by the great red dragon’s principle of “If autocracy fails, make sure democracy can’t succeed.” The great red dragon’s M.O. is that if it can’t be in power, then no one else can, either. If necessary, it will use a bitter struggle to destroy both sides. Wasn’t I just the same? If I couldn’t get the position, I didn’t want Brother Zhang to get it, either. I’d rather see the wrong person fill the role and the church’s work damaged to protect my own prestige and status. I was so selfish, despicable, crafty, and vicious, without the slightest reverence for God. I’d enjoyed so many truths expressed by God, and having that opportunity to do my duty was God showing me kindness. But instead of thinking about how to repay God’s love, I was jealous and strove for name and gain. I was serving as Satan’s minion, disrupting the work of God’s house. Wasn’t I a double-crossing degenerate? I thought about how I’d been dismissed from my duty a year before because I was fighting for name and gain, not doing my duty

properly, and couldn't do practical work. And now, I was in the same kind of situation but I was still pursuing name and status, not the truth. If I carried on that way, I'd be spurned and eliminated by God.

Later on, I read these words from God: **“You do not know your place, yet still you battle with each other in the dung. What can you gain from such struggle? If you truly had reverence for Me in your hearts, how could you fight with each other behind My back? No matter how high your status, are you not still a stinking little worm in the dung? Will you be able to sprout wings and become a dove in the sky?”** (The Word, Vol.

1. The Appearance and Work of God. When Falling Leaves Return to Their Roots, You Will Regret All the Evil You Have Done). **“Why does God say that people are ‘maggots’? In His eyes, these corrupt humans are clearly created beings—but do they fulfill the responsibilities and duties that created beings ought to? Though a lot of people are performing their duties, how well is their performance expressed? They are not in the least bit proactive in fulfilling their duty; rarely do they take it upon themselves to do so. If they are not pruned, dealt with, or disciplined, then they do nothing. So, too, is it always necessary to assemble, fellowship and provide in order for them to have even a little bit of faith, to be even a little bit proactive. Is this not the corruption of man? ... Nothing they think about all day long has anything to do with the truth or following the way of God; they spend all day stuffing their faces, and give no thought to anything. Even if they do give a bit of thought to something, it is not something in line with the truth principles. It hasn't the slightest thing to do with what God requires of mankind. All the work they perform is obstructive and disruptive and they do not remotely bear witness to God. Their minds are full of thoughts of how to seek whatever is good for the flesh, how to fight for status and renown, how to fit in among**

certain groups of people, and how to gain standing and have a good reputation. They eat the food God bestows upon them, enjoying everything that He provides, but they do not do what humans should do. Could God like such people? ... Above all, those who are maggots are worthless, shameless, and, in God's eyes, have no value! Why do I say that such people have no value? God made you, and gave you life, yet you cannot perform your duty, which is the bare minimum that you should do; you merely freeload. In His eyes, you are but a good-for-nothing, and there is no point in your being alive. Are such people not maggots? Thus, what should people do if they do not want to be maggots? First, find your own place and try by every means possible to fulfill your duty, and you will be connected to the Creator; you can give an account to Him. After that, consider how to achieve loyalty in fulfilling your duty. You should not be merely perfunctory, or muddle through; rather, you should put your whole heart into it. You should not try to fool the Creator. You should do whatever it is God asks you to do, and you should take heed and submit" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Six Indicators of Life Growth).

As I pondered God's words, I felt terribly distressed. I realized that God regarded my fight for name and gain as so filthy and vile. Having the good fortune to do my duty in God's house was God's exceptional exaltation, but I was not fulfilling my obligations. Instead, I only ever thought about my own name and status, and even disrupted the work of God's house for those things. I was playing the part of Satan. That was so disgusting and hateful to God! God says, **"No matter how high your status, are you not still a stinking little worm in the dung?"** I understood that I'm a created being, a filthy, corrupt person with no worth or dignity to speak of, so even if I did get a position, it couldn't change what I am. I

couldn't even do my duty well, but constantly vied for name and gain, wanted others to look up to me. Where was my conscience and reason? What value did my life have? Wasn't I an utterly worthless worm? After gaining some understanding of my nature and essence from what God's words revealed, I hated myself and became willing to forsake the flesh and practice the truth.

I later went to seek out Brother Zhang and opened up about my corruption, revealing my despicable motives and actions in the election. Not only did he not look down on me, but he shared fellowship on his own experience to help me. After fellowshiping, the wall between us disappeared and I felt really free and at ease. In my duty from then on, whenever I had a difficulty or didn't understand an issue, I went to Brother Zhang in seeking, and he always patiently answered my questions through fellowship. My own professional skills improved after a while. When I let go of name and status and practiced the truth, I experienced the ease and peace that came from doing my duty that way, and I grew closer to God. I once again escaped the fetters of name and status and got a taste of God's practical salvation for me.

The church's annual election kicked off in October 2017, and I was recommended as a candidate by the brothers and sisters. I did feel something stir within me, and I thought, "It's been over two years since I was removed from my leadership position, and I've heard that some brothers and sisters have a good opinion of me. They say my fellowship has become more practical and I've undergone some changes. I wonder if I can get a leadership position this time." I realized I was pursuing reputation and status again and thought about how painful it was before when I was shackled and constrained by those things. I knew I couldn't keep that pursuit up, that I should forsake the flesh and practice the truth. I then

thought of this passage of God's words: **"Once you have relinquished the reputation and status that are of Satan, you will no longer be constrained and deceived by satanic ideas and views. You will find release, and will feel more and more at ease; you will become free and liberated. When that day comes that you become free and liberated, you will feel that the things you have forsaken were but entanglements, and that the things you have truly gained are most precious to you. You will feel that those are the most valuable things, and are things most worthy of being treasured. Those things you liked—material pleasures, fame and fortune, status, money, prestige, and the esteem of others—will seem worthless to you; those things have caused you great suffering, and you will want them no more. You would not want them anymore even if you were granted even higher reputation and status; instead, you will detest and reject them from the bottom of your heart!"**

(The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Give Your True Heart to God, and You Can Obtain the Truth). My heart brightened, and I knew that pursuing name and status has no value, and that understanding and practicing the truth and doing the duty of a created being are the most precious things. In fact, participating in the election wasn't to fight for a leadership position, but it was to fulfill my responsibilities by taking part in the process. I had to let go of my wild desires for name and status and vote for a suitable leader according to the principles of the truth. That was what would be beneficial for the work of God's house. If I were chosen as a leader, I had to do my duty well. If I wasn't, I wouldn't blame God, but would do my duty to the best of my ability. Once I set my motives straight regarding the election, to my surprise, I was chosen to serve as a leader. Seeing this outcome, I didn't revel in it like I had in the past, thinking I was better than the others, but I felt it was my commission and responsibility, and I should focus on

pursuing the truth and doing my duty well so I could be worthy of God's love and salvation.

Over that time, nearly three years, God's judgment and chastisement have clearly shown me the harm that name and status do to me, and I've become determined to pursue the truth. Even though at times I still want to fight for name and gain, I'm able to consciously pray to God, focus on practicing the truth, and do my duty well. I'm no longer constrained by my satanic, corrupt disposition. When I let go of name and status, I felt that that wasn't all I'd let go of, but that I'd also let go of the heavy fetters Satan had bound me with. I feel so relaxed and free.

34. It Feels So Good to Take Off My Disguise

By Chen Yuan, China

In September 2018, I was elected as a church leader. I was very happy at the time. I felt this must have happened because I was better than most brothers and sisters, and I must pursue truth and do my duties. I didn't want people to think that my leadership was merely symbolic. One day I went to a group meeting. When discussing work, some of the brothers and sisters talked about specialist skills. I was a bit flustered. I knew almost nothing about it. What if they asked me questions, and I couldn't answer? Would they look down on me and wonder how I could lead if I didn't understand? I could just say nothing, but wouldn't that make me a useless leader? What could I do? I sat there like a cat on a hot tin roof, filled with anxiety. I couldn't understand what anyone was talking about. When they were about done talking, I quickly said, "If there are no other questions, let's end the meeting here." I couldn't relax until I left the meeting. I thought, "This group requires a lot of professional knowledge and I don't know anything about it, so I'd best not go to many meetings. If the others find out I don't know much about the professional things, they'll definitely look down on me. Who would take me seriously after that?"

Over the next couple of weeks or so, I went to meet with other groups every day and helped solve their problems and difficulties. Our church life improved. Everyone supported me, and I really wanted to meet with these groups. But I was troubled when I thought about the group that needed specialized knowledge. I was scared that I wouldn't know what they're talking about, so I would make excuses and rarely go. One night, the sister I worked with said the group had some problems, so she asked me to go to a meeting. I reluctantly agreed, but I was anxious. I thought, "If I can't solve

the problem, will the others say that I am an incompetent leader?" I was troubled. The next day, after we'd fellowshiped on God's word, I was afraid the others would ask questions about professional knowledge, and I would look stupid if I couldn't answer them. So I braced myself and continued to talk to stall the situation, but I felt uneasy. I asked them, "What other problems have yet to be resolved?" The group leader talked about their problems and solutions. I got confused when he started using some jargon. I wasn't sure if the problems had been completely solved or not. If they didn't find a solution, it would affect their progress. But if I asked detailed questions, they would certainly want to hear my opinion. But I didn't understand anything, and it would be embarrassing. After much consideration, I didn't say anything. Then, a sister talked about some of the difficulties she was experiencing that were related to some professional issues. I got even more confused. I didn't dare ask her what she meant. I was afraid that if I couldn't solve her problem, she'd think that I was not a good leader. I just talked a bit and avoided the issue by saying, "I'll look into this issue later." After the meeting, I was totally exhausted. I felt empty. Nothing was solved during this meeting. Wasn't I just muddling along in my duty? I also knew that the brothers and sisters in this group hadn't achieved much. Their work didn't progress much and I felt bad about it. I was afraid they'd say I didn't understand this work and look down on me. I just muddled my way through every meeting. I never really grasped the work situation and didn't solve any actual problems. I wasn't doing any actual work. Wasn't I deceiving God and fooling my brothers and sisters? I felt uncomfortable and blamed myself. I prayed to God to help me self-reflect and try to know myself.

One day during devotionals, I read a passage of God's words: **"All corrupted humans exhibit this problem: When they are ordinary**

brothers and sisters without status, they do not put on airs when interacting or speaking with anyone, nor do they adopt a certain style or tone in their speech; they are simply ordinary and normal, and do not need to package themselves. They do not feel any psychological pressure, and can fellowship openly and from the heart. They are approachable and are easy to interact with; others feel that they are very good people. However, as soon as they attain status, they become high and mighty, as if no one can reach them; they feel that they deserve respect, and that they and ordinary people are cut from different cloths. They look down on ordinary people and stop fellowshipping openly with others. Why do they no longer fellowship openly? They feel that they now have status, and are leaders. They think that leaders must have a certain image, be a bit loftier than ordinary people, and have more stature and be able to assume more responsibility; they believe that compared to ordinary people, leaders must have more patience, be able to suffer and expend more, and be able to withstand any temptation. They even think leaders cannot cry, no matter how many of their family members might die, and that, if they do have to cry, they must cry into their bedsheets, so that no one can see any shortcomings, defects, or weakness in them. They even feel that leaders cannot let anyone know if they have become negative; instead, they must hide all such things. They believe this is how one with status should act” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. To Resolve One’s Corrupt Disposition, One Must Have a Specific Path of Practice). God’s words revealed my true state. Before I was a leader, if I didn’t understand something, I would ask someone. I would fellowship openly with others if I had any issues or difficulties. After I became a leader, I felt I should be better than others. I felt that since I was elected by my brothers and sisters, I

should act as a leader. I needed to be better than them, I had to be able to understand and solve anything. So, when I went to group meetings, I held myself differently. But because there were some things I didn't understand, I was afraid the others would look down on me. I started acting fake and pretending, and I shirked my duty. I went to the groups with the easiest tasks where I could show my talent, and I avoided groups facing difficult tasks or involving areas that I didn't understand so I wouldn't lose face if I did a poor job. Even if I had gone, I would've just said some meaningless things and muddled my way through. I couldn't face the actual problems in those groups. I was too invested in my vanity and being a leader. God's house requires leaders to delve deeply into each task, to communicate truth and solve the issues our brothers and sisters encounter, so they can do their duties according to the principles of truth. This means doing real work and caring about God's will. I knew that the brothers and sisters in that group faced difficulties, but I wasn't willing to face their problems and seek the truth to solve them. I was obsessed with my own vanity, slipshod in my duty, and I lived only for prestige. I forgot all about the work of God's house. As a result, the problems in this group were not resolved and progress was delayed. Wasn't I just a false leader who enjoyed leadership status without doing the actual work? Pursuing status is exhausting and makes me feel uneasy in my heart. It also brings disruption to the work of God's house, a lose-lose situation. If I didn't repent, I would be doing evil and resisting God, which would make God abandon me. I quickly prayed to God and sought the path of practice.

Then, I read another passage from God's words. **"When you have no status, you can dissect yourself often and come to know yourself. Others can benefit from this. When you have status, you can still dissect yourself often and come to know yourself, allowing others to**

understand truth reality and comprehend God's will from your experiences. People can benefit from this, too, can they not? If you practice so, then, whether you have status or not, others will benefit from it just the same. So, what does status mean to you? It is, in fact, an extra, additional thing, like a piece of clothing or a hat; as long as you do not take it as too great a matter, it cannot constrain you. If you love status and place special emphasis on it, always treating it as a matter of importance, then it will have you under its control; after that, you will no longer want to know yourself, nor will you be willing to open up and lay yourself bare, or set aside your leadership role to speak and interact with others and fulfill your duty. What sort of problem is this? Have you not assumed this status for yourself? And have you not then just continued to occupy that position and are unwilling to give it up, and even vie with others to protect your status? Are you not just tormenting yourself? If you end up tormenting yourself to death, whom will you have to blame? If, when you have status, you can refrain from lording it over others, focusing instead on how to perform your duties well, doing everything you should and fulfilling all the duties you ought, and if you see yourself as an ordinary brother or sister, then will you not have cast aside the yoke of status?" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the

Last Days. To Resolve One's Corrupt Disposition, One Must Have a Specific Path of Practice). After reading God's words, I understood that when God exalted me to do my duty as a leader, He wasn't giving me status, but a commission, a responsibility. No matter how difficult the problems were, I needed to commit fully to solving them. When interacting with brothers and sisters, I shouldn't rely on my leadership status. Whenever I reveal corrupt disposition, or difficulties or deficiencies arise, I must communicate openly and be truthful and let others see my corruption and deficiencies, and know

exactly who I am. There must be no faking or pretending. I should just be myself and only give fellowship on what I understand. When I don't understand, I must seek the truth and fellowship with my brothers and sisters to do the best work possible together. Later I went to gatherings in that group. When I encountered problems related to this expertise, I consciously let go of my ego. I actively asked others about the things I didn't understand and asked them to explain. They didn't think any less of me. They also opened up about their problems and difficulties in their work. When they talked, I listened carefully and tried to understand. That's when I gained some insight into their problems and fellowshipped with them using the principles of the truth. I also studied this area of expertise in my own time. When encountering difficulties, I'd look for answers with them. By working together, we were able to complement each other. We began to solve many problems in our work and we achieved better results in our duty. I felt much more relaxed and at ease.

A few months later, the church expanded the scope of my work. I knew I had a lot to learn. When I ran into difficulties, I'd often pray to God, and put God's words into practice, and I solved some practical problems. Brothers and sisters began to approve of me and look up to me, and I began to enjoy that feeling. Without realizing it, I began to focus on status again. One day, during a co-workers' meeting, our leader said that a certain church's meetings hadn't been very effective. My co-workers recommended that I go to the church to solve the problem. I thought to myself, "It seems like I possess some reality of the truth and can help solve problems. I must be outstanding among the co-workers. I need to work hard and show them what I can do." As a result of my wrong intentions, God arranged a situation to deal with me. One day, Sister Li, a group leader, had some difficulties and was feeling a little negative. I quickly found two passages of

God's words and used my experience to fellowship with her. This went on for over thirty minutes, but it seemed to have no effect on her. I also felt that my fellowship was boring and didn't solve anything. Then, Sister An brought up a passage of God's words, and Sister Li began nodding and smiling. At the time, I felt a bit ashamed. The passage that Sister An referred to was more appropriate. I wondered what Sister Li would think of me. Would she say I was an unqualified leader, that I couldn't quote suitable passages of God's words or resolve problems as well as Sister An? I felt frustrated and didn't want to fellowship anymore. A few days later, Brother Zhang was in a bad state. I found some related passages in advance and thought, "I need this fellowship to go well in order to save face in front of Sister An. Otherwise, how can I do this job?" When I saw Brother Zhang, I was very energetic and proactive. I tried to communicate everything I knew. Unexpectedly, Brother Zhang impatiently said to me, "Sister, I understand what you're saying, but my state isn't improving. Let me think about it some more." His words shocked me. I just sat there at a loss for words. I wanted to hide under a rock. I was so troubled, and thought, "What's wrong with me? This didn't use to happen when I talked with other brothers and sisters. Why do I keep dropping the ball? This will make them look down on me. Will they say that all I do is talk and that I can't resolve real problems?" I forget how the meeting ended.

After that, whenever I spent time with Sister An, I got very self-conscious. Sometimes the way she looked at me or the way she talked was a bit harsh. I'd think, "Does she have a problem with me? Does she not approve of me?" I felt I should keep my distance in the future so I wouldn't reveal any more shortcomings. In front of other brothers and sisters, I also carefully maintained appearances. I intentionally distanced myself and rarely talked to them or helped with their problems. I stopped doing my

duty responsibly. Slowly, I began to feel a darkness looming over my heart. I wasn't able to understand or resolve others' problems. Sometimes I was afraid to meet with them. I just muddled through each day and felt that God had abandoned me. It was then that I finally prayed to God: "God, I'm always trying to maintain my reputation and I'm always pretending. I'm not responsible in my duty anymore. You have hidden Your face from me and that is Your righteousness, but I am willing to turn to You and reflect on myself." After that, I read God's words: **"People themselves are objects of creation. Can objects of creation achieve omnipotence? Can they achieve perfection and flawlessness? Can they achieve proficiency in everything, come to understand everything, and accomplish everything? They cannot. However, within humans, there is a weakness. As soon as they learn a skill or profession, people feel that they are capable, that they are people with status and worth, and that they are professionals. No matter how 'capable' they think they are, they all want to package themselves up, disguise themselves as lofty personages, and appear perfect and flawless, without a single defect; in the eyes of others, they wish to be regarded as great, powerful, fully capable, and able to accomplish anything. They feel that if they sought others' help in a matter, they would appear incapable, weak, and inferior, and that people would look down on them. For this reason, they always want to keep up a front. ... What kind of disposition is this? Such people are so arrogant, they have lost all sense!"** (The Word, Vol.

3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The Five States Necessary to Be on the Right Track in One's Faith). **"Some people particularly idolize Paul. They like to go out and give speeches and do work, they like to attend gatherings and preach, and they like people listening to them, worshiping them, and revolving around them. They like to have status in the minds of others,**

and they appreciate it when others value the image they present. Let us analyze their nature from these behaviors: What is their nature? If they really behave like this, then it is enough to show that they are arrogant and conceited. They do not worship God at all; they seek a higher status and wish to have authority over others, to possess them, and to have status in their minds. This is the classic image of Satan. The aspects of their nature that stand out are arrogance and conceit, an unwillingness to worship God, and a desire to be worshiped by others. Such behaviors can give you a very clear view into their nature” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. How to Know Man’s Nature). After reading God’s words, I understood that I’m just one of God’s creatures. It’s impossible for me to understand and master everything. Whether it concerns truth or specialized knowledge, the things I can understand and grasp are very limited. It’s normal to overlook things and make mistakes, but I didn’t really know myself, and I didn’t want to admit my shortcomings. I wanted to be perfect, high and mighty, and I just pretended to be someone else, and paid too much attention to what others thought of me. When my co-workers recommended that I go to that church to solve their problems, I felt I had the reality of the truth and was better than them, so I wanted to show my talents and prove myself. When paired with Sister An, I felt like I was the leader and was there to solve problems, so I should be better than her at everything. When I saw how Sister An solved the others’ problems and I kept dropping the ball, I felt that I had lost face and I wanted to run away, so I deliberately distanced myself from others and started shirking my duty. The problems in the church life still continued, preventing the brothers and sisters from gaining life entry. I realized the reason I was always being fake was because I’d been corrupted by Satan’s poisons like “Men should always strive to be better than their

contemporaries,” “As a tree lives for its bark, a man lives for his face,” and “A man leaves his name behind wherever he stays, just as a goose utters its cry wherever it flies.” No matter which group I was in, I tried to fake my way through and hide my shortcomings. I wanted people to only see my good side and only leave them with a good impression. I thought that it gave my life value and dignity, but when that feeling went away, I felt pained and dejected. I kept my guard up and was suspicious about others. It was exhausting. God uplifted me to do my duty as a leader to exalt and bear witness to Him, to fellowship the truth to solve practical problems and to bring brothers and sisters to God. But I didn’t do my best to uphold the work of God’s house. Instead, I took it as a chance to show off and be admired. When I didn’t get what I wanted, I neglected my job. I only ever thought about the rise and fall of my prestige and status, and I didn’t pursue truth or fulfill my responsibilities. As a result, God despised me, and my spirit dwelled in darkness. I not only couldn’t solve any real problems, I wasn’t even able to do the things I was originally able to do. I witnessed God’s righteousness and holiness. Paul’s nature was arrogant and competitive. He blindly pursued status and wanted to be admired. He brought people before himself and embarked on the path of resisting God. I didn’t pursue truth, but just blindly pursued status. I cared too much about what others thought of me and wanted to win them over and deceive them. Just like Paul, I took the path of resisting God! When I realized this, I hurriedly prayed to God and repented. I didn’t want to pretend anymore or protect my own status. I wanted to practice the truth and be an honest person.

When I next met with brothers and sisters, I wanted to tell them what I’d been going through, to expose my own corruption, but I just couldn’t get the words out. I was the church leader and was supposed to oversee their

work. If I told them everything, warts and all, would they think I'm not a person who pursues the truth, that I'm not suitable to be a leader? It was like a tug of war in my mind. That's when I realized I was trying to pretend again and maintain my reputation. I thought about how I kept valuing status again and again, which disrupted the work of God's house and put me on the wrong path. My heart was filled with fear. I thought of God's words: **"You do not need to cover anything up, make any modifications, or employ any tricks for the sake of your own reputation, self-respect, and status, and this also applies to any mistakes you have made; such pointless work is unnecessary. If you do not, then you will live easily and tirelessly, and completely in the light. Only such people can win God's praise"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only Those Who Practice the Truth Are God-Fearing). God's words brightened my heart and gave me motivation. I felt that being in this environment was an opportunity to practice truth. I could no longer hide my true self and protect my status, so I shared all my corruption and the lessons I'd learned with my brothers and sisters. We all got something out of this fellowship and grew closer to each other. We also talked about the work issues, and by drawing on each other's strengths, we were able to rectify the mistakes in our duty. After some time, the problems in this church were resolved. The brothers' and sisters' states also improved, and they began to actively do their duty. After that, when I did my duty, even though I still sometimes felt constrained by thoughts of status, I was able to consciously pray to God, practice truth, and be honest, and I could be open about my corruption. Gradually, I stopped paying so much attention to my status. Since then, I've been able to get along with my brothers and sisters simply by being open without pretending. Without all the fakery, I'm able to pursue the truth and do my duty in a grounded way.

This is the result of the judgment and chastisement of God's words! Thanks be to God!

35. Days of Seeking Fame and Gain

By Li Min, Spain

“In his life, if man wishes to be cleansed and achieve changes in his disposition, if he wishes to live out a life of meaning and fulfill his duty as a creature, then he must accept God’s chastisement and judgment, and must not allow God’s discipline and God’s smiting to depart from him, in order that he may free himself from the manipulation and influence of Satan, and live in the light of God. Know that God’s chastisement and judgment is the light, and the light of man’s salvation, and that there is no better blessing, grace or protection for man” (Follow the Lamb and Sing New Songs, God’s Chastisement and Judgment Is the Light of Man’s Salvation). Singing this hymn of God’s words is deeply moving for me. I used to live by poisons of Satan like “Stand out above the rest, and bring honor to your ancestors,” and “Man struggles upwards; water flows downwards.” I constantly sought fame and status, both duped and damaged by Satan, fretting over gains and losses of my fame and status. It was a painful way to live. It wasn’t until I experienced the judgment, chastisement, chastening, and disciplining of God’s words that I came to understand a bit about my corrupt nature and gained some clarity on the essence and consequences of seeking fame and status. I finally started to awaken and feel remorse. I no longer wanted to live that way, but just to pursue the truth and do my duty well to satisfy God.

I remember it was back in September of 2016 that I started to do my duty of making hymns. Soon after that, our leader approached us to discuss choosing a team leader. I was thrilled as soon as I heard this and began to weigh the prospective candidates in my mind. Other brothers and sisters who did this same duty with me were either too young or not skilled

enough. There was just Brother Li—his fellowship on the truth was quite practical, and he understood some of the work. Plus, he had a calm demeanor. I felt that there was a good chance he'd be picked, but my fellowship wasn't bad either, and I was a particularly good learner and fairly quick at picking up new things. I also was good at seeing the big picture. So, I figured my chances at getting elected should be better than his. But everyone in the team was new to that duty and we hadn't been working together long, so we didn't know each other well enough. Whether they'd choose me was an unknown. So, I suggested to the leader that he evaluate the results of the duties each of us had fulfilled, and then designate someone to lead the team temporarily. Everyone agreed. I was secretly pleased; I felt I had a pretty good track record in duty, so I probably had this election in the bag. The next day, I went to the gathering full of confidence, but to my surprise, Brother Li was ultimately chosen. I was really disappointed at the time, but to save face, I pretended to be unperturbed and said, "Thanks be to God. From now on, let's all work together to fulfill our duties." Deep down, though, I couldn't accept it at all. I felt drained of energy on my walk home. I just couldn't wrap my head around it: What did Brother Li have on me? I simply couldn't accept it. I felt I clearly had a lot of talent, so by not picking me, wasn't that just putting it all to waste? I therefore felt I absolutely had to prove myself and show the others what I was made of. Though I appeared calm on the surface after that, I was quietly pitting myself against Brother Li. I threw myself into studying to improve my skills so I could outdo him. I quietly celebrated when I saw he was a slow learner, thinking, "So the truth comes out! You're not so great after all! Over time, all our brothers and sisters will see who's better, too." I reveled in every little mistake he made, thinking to myself, "Do you have what it takes? Now they'll see you for what you are!" Watching Brother Li

resolve others' problems made me jealous. I felt that I had that kind of practical experience too, and if I were team leader, I'd be good at fellowshiping, too. Especially when we were discussing work, no matter what Brother Li suggested, I scrambled to say something more comprehensive and insightful.

I remember in one meeting, while we were discussing ideas for a hymn, Brother Li made a really good suggestion. But I thought if I accepted it, wouldn't that make him look better than me? Then how could I hold my head up? I blurted out a rebuttal and made a different suggestion, but the team ended up going with his idea. It was like a slap in the face. Seeing the brothers and sisters discussing it animatedly, I felt even more opposed to Brother Li, and I didn't have any interest in listening further. I recalled the previous duty I had fulfilled; anyway, I had been team leader, and the brothers and sisters had all looked up to me. But now, I wasn't team leader anymore, and Brother Li was looking better than me at every turn. Had I known this would happen, I wouldn't have come here to fulfill my duty. After the gathering, my thoughts were churning, and I was feeling really dark inside. Vaguely aware that I wasn't in the right state, I prayed to God, and this passage of His words came to mind: **"I have a profound knowledge of the impurities in the hearts of each created being, and before I created you, I already knew of the unrighteousness that existed deep in the human heart, and I knew all the deception and crookedness in the human heart. Therefore, even though there are no traces at all when people do unrighteous things, I still know that the unrighteousness harbored within your hearts surpasses the richness of all things that I created. Every one of you has risen to the pinnacle of the multitudes; you have ascended to be the ancestors of the masses. You are extremely arbitrary, and you run amok among all of the**

maggots, seeking a place of ease and attempting to devour the maggots that are smaller than you. You are malicious and sinister in your hearts, surpassing even the ghosts that have sunk to the bottom of the sea. You reside in the bottom of the dung, disturbing the maggots from top to bottom until they have no peace, fighting each other for a while and then calming down. You do not know your place, yet still you battle with each other in the dung. What can you gain from such struggle? If you truly had reverence for Me in your hearts, how could you fight with each other behind My back? No matter how high your status, are you not still a stinking little worm in the dung? Will you be able to sprout wings and become a dove in the sky?" (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. When Falling Leaves Return to Their Roots, You Will Regret All the Evil You Have Done). God's words exposed all the ugliness of my vying for name and gain. Since my acceptance of this duty, I'd been consumed with ambition, dying to achieve something so the brothers and sisters and the leader would all think highly of me and I could get a foothold in the team. During the selection process, I had tried to use my wits to my own advantage, getting the leader to hold an interim election based on the duties we had fulfilled in the past. I became jealous when Brother Li was chosen, and harbored a competitive attitude toward him. When I saw some issues in his work, I didn't uphold the church's interests or try to help him, but was just dying for him to be replaced because of incompetence, which would give me a shot at being team leader. I was mired in the state of intrigue and seeking name and gain, and my actions were completely devoid of conscience or reason. It was truly despicable and toxic. I was so upset and really reproached myself when I realized this. I prayed to God and asked Him to guide me to practice the truth so I would no longer be bound and constrained by my corrupt, satanic disposition.

One day, I read this passage of God's words: **"For each of you fulfilling your duty, no matter how profoundly you understand the truth, if you wish to enter truth reality, then the simplest way to practice is to think of the interests of God's house in everything you do, and to let go of your selfish desires, your individual intent, motives, prestige, and status. Put the interests of God's house first—this is the least you should do. If a person performing his duty cannot do even this much, then how can he be said to be performing his duty? This is not performing one's duty"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Give Your True Heart to God, and You Can Obtain the Truth). God's words pointed me toward the principle and direction in performing my duty, which was letting go of my desire for name and status, and putting the church's work first no matter what, and performing my duty to the best of my ability. Only then would I be fulfilling the duty of a created being, and have a bit of a human likeness. If I sought name and status and neglected my main work, that wouldn't be fulfilling my duty; I would be resisting God and doing evil. After that, I opened up to my brothers and sisters about all this in a gathering and revealed my own corruption. They didn't look down on me, and that wall between me and Brother Li disappeared. After that I actively shared fellowship during gatherings he was facilitating, and I didn't snicker when I saw flaws in his work. Instead, I offered suggestions and support, and whenever I saw him helping brothers and sisters resolve their problems, I didn't become jealous like before, but felt that in God's house, it's just our roles that are different, not our standing. I just wanted to work together with him to do our duties well. I felt much more at ease when I put that into practice, and later I saw God's blessings. Though our team had previously had the worst musical foundations, it didn't take long before we had

produced the first Spanish song, and it was quite well-received by other brothers and sisters.

About half a year passed and I was becoming more familiar with the work. Brothers and sisters tended to accept my ideas when we were discussing work. And I usually led our monthly team work exchanges. I felt my need for name and status had largely been satisfied. Also, right around then, our leader had me do more to drive the work. Being highly thought of by my leader like that made me feel even more that I was a valuable talent. At one point, we needed someone to take on an extra task, and even though it was right up my alley, I did some mental calculations: “It won’t put me in the limelight, and will take up my time. So if I work on it, I’ll probably lose some of the attention I have on me. But if Brother Li does it, I can carve out my own niche here.” So, I found every possible excuse to turn it down, and recommended that Brother Li do it instead. The truth is that I felt guilty and unsettled at the time, but I remained stubborn, wanting to protect my position. Brother Li took on that unfamiliar task. He became negative after encountering a number of difficulties, which in turn impacted his work. After hearing about this, I still didn’t reflect on myself. Brother Li was often unable to participate in the work done by our team, so most matters, large and small, fell to me. As a result, my desire for name and status only swelled. I saw that there were some deviations and shortcomings in brothers’ and sisters’ work that were hindering our progress, and this left me feeling really anxious. I thought, “I’m in charge of this work, so if something goes wrong, what will the leader think of me? Will I be seen as incompetent?” Thinking of that, I couldn’t help but lose my temper and scold brothers and sisters, “How can you call this doing your duty? Can’t you focus? Can you stop dropping the ball?” As a result, they all ended up feeling really constrained by me. Another time, I was away for a few days

to fulfill my duty, and when I got back, I saw a sister had made a work plan without first discussing it with me. This made me really angry. I thought, “This is just too much! You have no respect for me at all.” I totally laid into her. Meanwhile, one problem after another was starting to come up in the team. One time, my ideas weren’t being adopted by the brothers and sisters, and they were even giving me some feedback. I just felt it was an affront, and my temper flared up. I said, “Since all of you seem to think otherwise, just do as you see fit! And then when things go wrong, you have to take responsibility for it!” After sounding off, I felt an inexplicable kind of panic and some self-reproach. I thought about how I had been living within an arrogant disposition, always losing my temper at my brothers and sisters. Would God approve of that? But then I thought, “Wasn’t I doing that for the sake of my duty? Who among us has never revealed a bit of corruption?” I hadn’t genuinely reflected upon myself. The next day, I sprained an ankle while playing basketball; it swelled up like a balloon and became really painful. I couldn’t walk or perform my duty. I became very aware that this was God’s discipline, and only then did I start to reflect upon myself. All that time, I’d been seeking name and status, being arrogant, and scolding my brothers and sisters. It played out in my mind, scene by scene, like a movie. I hated myself and wondered: Why had I never changed? Why couldn’t I keep myself from rebelling against and resisting God?

A few days later, some brothers and sisters came to see me and fellowshiped with me on God’s will. They also read a passage of His words that specifically addressed my state: **“If some people see someone better than they are, they suppress them, start a rumor about them, or employ some unscrupulous means so that other people don’t look highly upon them, and that no one is any better than anyone else, then this is the corrupt disposition of arrogance and self-rightness, as well as**

crookedness, deceitfulness and insidiousness, and these people stop at nothing to achieve their aims. They live like this and yet still think they're great and that they're good people. However, do they have God-fearing hearts? First of all, to speak from the perspective of the natures of these matters, are not people who act this way simply doing as they please? Do they consider the interests of God's family? They think only of their own feelings and they want only to achieve their own aims, regardless of the loss suffered by the work of God's family. Not only are people like this arrogant and self-right, they are also selfish and contemptible; they are utterly inconsiderate of God's intention, and people like this, without a shadow of a doubt, do not possess God-fearing hearts. This is why they do whatever they want and act wantonly, without any sense of blame, without any trepidation, without any apprehension or worry, and without considering the consequences. This is what they often do, and how they have always behaved. What are the consequences such people face? They will be in trouble, right? To put it lightly, such people are far too jealous and have too strong a desire for personal fame and status; they are too deceitful and treacherous. To put it more harshly, the essential problem is that such people's hearts are not even the slightest bit God-fearing. They do not fear God, they believe themselves to be of utmost importance, and they regard every aspect of themselves as being higher than God and higher than the truth. In their hearts, God is the least worthy of mention and the most insignificant, and God does not have any status in their hearts at all. Have those who have no place for God in their hearts, and who do not revere God, attained entry into the truth? (No.) So, when they typically go around merrily keeping themselves busy and exerting quite a lot of energy, what are they doing? Such people even claim to have

abandoned everything to expend for God and suffered a great deal, but actually, the motive, principle, and objective of all their actions are to benefit themselves; they are only trying to protect all of their own interests. Would you or would you not say that this sort of person is terrible? What sort of person is one who does not revere God? Are they not arrogant? Are they not Satan? What kinds of things do not revere God? Leaving aside the animals, all those that do not revere God include demons, Satan, the archangel, and those who contend with God” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The Five States Necessary to

Be on the Right Track in One’s Faith). God’s harsh words really cut me to the quick. I saw I’d been so arrogant, selfish, and cunning, totally lacking reverence for God. When someone was needed to take on that extra task, I knew full well that I was relatively well-suited for it, but to maintain my own name and status, I thought nothing of playing games, which compromised the work of God’s house. When I saw issues with brothers’ and sisters’ work that hindered our progress, I didn’t work with them to resolve the problems; instead, I thought they were dragging me down and impacting my chance to stand out, so I took advantage of my position to scold them, and they all felt constrained and lived in state of suffering. I wouldn’t accept their suggestions, either. I went into a sulk, lost my temper, and vented my frustrations in doing my duty, without any consideration whatsoever for how the church’s work might be impacted. Actually, I didn’t have any real talent; all I had was a little interest in music and some enthusiasm—yet God had been gracious enough to give me this opportunity so I could make progress professionally and in my pursuit of the truth. Instead of cherishing it, however, I just bull-headedly strove for status and prestige. I pursued my own interests while waving the flag of doing my duty, exploiting my brothers and sisters as tools to help me get ahead. I was totally lacking in

humanity. In all my actions, I was doing evil and offending God's disposition. It was disgusting and odious for God! Realizing that frightened me and I felt a lot of self-reproach. I prayed to God through my tears: "Oh God, I've been so wrong! I don't want to keep being rebellious and competing with You, and I don't want to keep fighting for personal gain. I'm ready to repent."

I later read these words from God: **"What does Satan use to keep man firmly within its control? (Fame and gain.) So, Satan uses fame and gain to control man's thoughts, until all people can think of is fame and gain. They struggle for fame and gain, suffer hardships for fame and gain, endure humiliation for fame and gain, sacrifice everything they have for fame and gain, and they will make any judgment or decision for the sake of fame and gain. In this way, Satan binds people with invisible shackles, and they have neither the strength nor the courage to throw them off. They unknowingly bear these shackles and trudge ever onward with great difficulty. For the sake of this fame and gain, mankind shuns God and betrays Him and becomes increasingly wicked. In this way, therefore, one generation after another is destroyed in the midst of Satan's fame and gain"** (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique VI). This revelation from God's words gave me some understanding of Satan's despicable tactic and evil motive of using fame and gain to corrupt people. It binds and harms people this way, getting them to betray and distance themselves from God. Name and status are tools Satan uses to do people in. I had been influenced and educated by Satan since I was little, and taken in by its philosophies like "Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost," "Stand out above the rest, and bring honor to your ancestors," and "Man struggles upwards; water flows downwards." I had adopted them as my own personal mottos. I grew more

and more arrogant, and in any group I'd always vie for status so others would look up to me. Even after becoming a believer, I still pursued name and status instead of pursuing the truth. I suffered and paid a price in my duty for these things, working hard to improve my own skills to compete and vie with others. I thought I was really something every time I achieved anything, so I haughtily scolded brothers and sisters. I really was insufferably arrogant and conceited; I lacked any human likeness whatsoever in the way I lived. I was living by satanic philosophies, throwing myself into obtaining name and status. I not only hurt others, but I did so many other things that were disgusting to God. I also impacted the church's work with my transgressions and evil deeds. Name and status have done me so much harm. Only then did I see that satanic philosophies such as, "Stand out above the rest," and "Being a cut above," are all fallacies, and living by these lies just leads to further corruption and evil, causing one to rebel against and resist God and, ultimately, to be punished by Him. When I realized all this, I felt I had been so blind and ignorant to treat name and status as though they were lifelines to which I had to cling, no matter what. I also saw that pursuing name and status was a path that ran contrary to God. I prayed and repented before God. After that, whenever I thought about pursuing those things in my duty, I felt really scared, so I prayed to God, and forsook the flesh. In addition, I'd open up to my brothers and sisters, exposing my own corruption. After some time, I felt I had much less of a drive to pursue name and status, and I began to have a sense of internal peace.

Later, when the church was choosing a leader, my desire for name and status reared its head once more during voting, and an internal battle ensued: "Should I vote for Brother Li, or for myself? As for me, I'm really not as good at resolving issues through fellowship on the truth. As for him,

then on the off chance that he wins, how would others see me?” I realized I was seeking fame and status again, and felt that kind of thinking was really ugly. I prayed to God, forsaking and cursing those thoughts. Later, another passage of God’s words came to mind: **“If your mind is filled with thoughts of how to attain a higher position, or what to do in front of others to get them to admire you, then you are on the wrong path. It means you are doing things for Satan; you are rendering service. If your mind is filled with thoughts of how to change so that you will be more and more like a human, be in line with God’s intentions, be capable of submitting to Him and revering Him, and show restraint and accept His scrutiny in everything you do, then your condition will get better and better. This is what it means to be one who lives before God. As such, there are two paths: One merely emphasizes behavior, fulfilling one’s own ambitions, desires, intents, and plans; this is living before Satan and living under its domain. The other path emphasizes how to satisfy God’s will, enter truth reality, submit to God, and have no misconceptions or disobedience toward Him, so that one reveres God and performs one’s duty well. This is what it means to live before God”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only by Practicing the Truth Can One Possess Normal Humanity). Mulling over God’s words, I understood that what He looks at are people’s motives and perspectives in their actions—these are really important. If my impetus is reputation and status, and the desire to get others to think highly of me, then that will be a path against God and will never lead me to the truth, or to being perfected by God. I became willing to correct my motives, and whether I was elected church leader or not, I was ready to submit to God’s arrangements and perform my duty well. Later on, when it came time to vote, I weighed up the principles and voted for Brother Li. Ultimately, he was chosen to serve as a church

leader. I was fine with it. Even though I hadn't won, I had no regrets, because I had finally put the truth into practice, thereby casting off the shackles of name and status. I also felt an inner peace and stability from practicing the truth and satisfying God, and experienced that God's judgment and chastisement truly are salvation for me.

36. Liberated From Fame and Fortune

By Xiao Min, China

Before becoming a believer, I was always pursuing name and status, and I'd be jealous and upset about it if anyone outdid me. I couldn't help but go head-to-head with them and compare myself to them. I did feel like living that way was painful and exhausting, but I also figured, weren't fame and fortune what we're supposed to go after in life? Then I accepted God's work of the last days, and by experiencing the judgment and chastisement of God's words I was finally able to escape the bonds of fame and fortune, and live out a bit of a human likeness.

I was elected to be a church leader a year ago. I knew this was God's kindness and elevation. I quietly resolved to pursue the truth in earnest and do my duty well. After that, I was busy with the work of the church, and when I ran into difficulties, I leaned on God and looked to Him. I also discussed them with co-workers and sought the truth to resolve them. After a little while, every aspect of the church's work started to make headway, and I gave heartfelt thanks to God for His guidance. Before long, an election was held for another church leader, and to my surprise Sister Xia was chosen, who had done a duty with me a few years back. Sister Xia had not believed in God for very long and her life experience was a little superficial. When we worked together before, I needed to help her resolve some of the difficulties and issues she encountered. I felt that this time around in our work together, I'd definitely be more capable than her.

Once, I returned home to find a message Sister Xia had left for me, saying there was a group leader at Chengxi Church that couldn't do practical work and had to be replaced, and that there were some other practical issues that needed immediate resolution. She wanted me to go help

out. Thinking this over, I felt that she really must think I was more capable than her, and since she looked up to me so much, I had to do a good job and not embarrass myself! The more I thought about it, the happier I felt. When I arrived at the gathering, I discovered that Sister Xia had a detailed understanding of the work, and that her fellowship on the truth was layered and practical. I was surprised to see that she'd progressed quite a bit over the last few years. I had thought I was more able than her and I'd need to give her a lot of guidance with work, but it looked like she was no less competent than me! I was really disgruntled and it looked to me like she was going to take the lead, so I felt I had to let all our brothers and sisters see what I was made of! I didn't dare slack off in the slightest but racked my brains to think of how I could make my fellowship better than hers. As a result, my fellowship turned out to be dull as ditchwater, and even I got no enjoyment out of it. I felt like I'd lost prestige and felt really down.

From then on, I just couldn't stop competing with Sister Xia. One time in a gathering when she learned about brothers' and sisters' states, she found relevant words of God, then wove them together with her actual experience in her fellowship, and I saw everyone nodding their heads while listening. Some were taking notes, and some said, "From now on we have a path to take." I felt both admiration and envy at this, and so what was I thinking? "Now I have to hurry up and share some fellowship. No matter what, I can't look like I don't match up to her." But the more I thought that, the less I could think of anything to fellowship. I started to become prejudiced against Sister Xia, thinking, "Do you have to fellowship quite so much? You've already said all there is to say. I'm just sitting here like the ears of a deaf person—nothing but decoration. This won't do, I have to share some fellowship to recover some of my pride." Just when she stopped to take a drink of water, I shifted my stool up toward the front and started to

fellowship. I wanted to share something really good, but I just couldn't seem to hit the mark. My fellowship was a jumble. When I saw the brothers and sisters giving me funny looks, I realized that I'd gone entirely off-topic. I felt incredibly uncomfortable and wanted to go find a hole to crawl into. I'd made a fool of myself. I'd just wanted to make myself look good, but I ended up looking ridiculous. I put myself on stage, and everyone saw me fail. In my heart, I started to blame God for enlightening my sister, but not me, and I worried about how the other brothers and sisters would see me from then on. The more my mind went down this road, the more upset I became. I wanted to run away from the situation and didn't want to work with her anymore. I remember once in a gathering, a couple of sisters weren't in a very good state, and there wasn't any improvement after Sister Xia's fellowship. Not only did I not help fellowship, but I even thought, "Now everyone will see that she can't resolve problems, so they won't look up to her while looking down on me." Over that period of time, I was constantly trying to compete with Sister Xia, and my spiritual state grew darker and darker. I lacked any light when fellowshiping on God's words in gatherings, and when I saw brothers and sisters facing difficulties or problems, I didn't know how to resolve them. I started nodding off really early every night, and I had to force myself to do my duty. My suffering just kept growing. I could do nothing but pray to God and ask Him to save me.

I read this passage of God's words in my devotionals one day: **"As soon as it touches upon position, face, or reputation, everyone's heart leaps in anticipation, and each of you always wants to stand out, be famous, and be recognized. Everyone is unwilling to yield, always instead wishing to contend—even though contending is embarrassing and not allowed in God's house. However, without contention, you still are not content. When you see someone stand out, you feel jealous,**

hatred, and that it is unfair. ‘Why can’t I stand out? Why is it always that person who gets to stand out, and it’s never my turn?’ You then feel some resentment. You try to repress it, but you cannot. You pray to God and feel better for a while, but then as soon as you encounter this sort of situation again, you cannot overcome it. Does this not display an immature stature? Is not a person’s falling into such states a trap? These are the shackles of Satan’s corrupt nature that bind humans” (The

Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Give Your True Heart to God, and You Can Obtain the Truth). God’s words totally revealed my state and went straight to my heart. I reflected on why I was living in such a difficult, tiring way. The root of it was that my desire for name and status was too strong, and that my disposition was too arrogant. I thought back on when I had just started doing this duty. When I had a bit of success in my work and brothers and sisters looked up to me, I really admired myself and thought of myself as talented. Working with Sister Xia and seeing her doing better than me, I became jealous, disagreeable, and was constantly competing with her. When I couldn’t surpass her, I became negative and complained, and even vented my feelings in my duty. When I saw that she hadn’t resolved those sisters’ states, not only did I not help with fellowship, but I refused to lift a finger and I reveled in her failure. I was determined to see her embarrassed. How was that doing my duty? As a leader in the church, I was totally irresponsible and I didn’t think of the church’s work at all or about whether brothers’ and sisters’ problems had been resolved. I was just thinking about how I could be above her. I was so selfish and despicable, and so cunning. Name and status had addled my brain. I was willing to see brothers and sisters not have their problems resolved, to see the church’s work compromised, as long as I could protect my reputation and status. Wasn’t I biting the hand that fed me? I just wasn’t worthy of such an important duty.

It was so disgusting, so hateful to God! At this thought, I lost no time coming before God to pray and repent, asking Him to guide me to cast off the shackles of name and status.

I later read this passage of God's words: **“Do not always do things for your own sake and do not constantly consider your own interests; give no thought to your own status, prestige, or reputation. Also do not consider the interests of man. You must first give thought to the interests of God's house, and make them your first priority. You should be considerate of God's will and begin by contemplating whether or not you have been impure in the fulfillment of your duty, whether you have done your utmost to be loyal, done your best to fulfill your responsibilities, and given your all, as well as whether or not you have wholeheartedly given thought to your duty and the work of God's house. You must give consideration to these things. Think about them frequently, and it will be easier for you to perform your duty well”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Give Your True Heart to God, and You Can Obtain the Truth). Reading these words from God immediately brightened my heart, and I then had a path. If I wanted to be freed from the bonds of name and status, first I had to set my own heart right. I had to keep my mind on God's commission and be considerate of God's will, and I had to think of how I could do my duty well. With more positive things filling my heart, then negative things like name, status, vanity and prestige would be easier to let go of. I realized that others thinking I'm something doesn't mean that God approves of me, and others thinking I'm nothing doesn't mean that God won't save me. What's important is my attitude toward God, and whether I can practice the truth and do my duty well. I gave thanks for God's enlightenment that turned me back from my wrong pursuits. I didn't want to compete with Sister Xia anymore, but only wanted to do the duty of

a created being to satisfy God. From then on, I consciously prayed to God and put my heart into my duty, and in church gatherings, I listened to the fellowship of brothers and sisters carefully. When I discovered some issues, I seriously pondered them, then found relevant words of God and combined them with my own experiences for fellowship. I also learned from Sister Xia's strengths to make up for my own weaknesses. Practicing this way left me feeling much more relaxed and at ease, and my state improved a lot. I felt such gratitude to God from the bottom of my heart. But the desire for name and status was so deeply rooted within me that the moment the right situation arose, this satanic nature of mine appeared once again.

I remember there was one time I was about to go take care of some problems in a group, and just as I was on my way out, Sister Xia said that the issues in that group were kind of complex, and she wanted to go with me. Hearing her say this crushed that wave of happiness I was riding. I thought, "So you're the only one who can fix things? You just have to show what you can do, don't you? What do you mean by saying this in front of our superior? Aren't you intentionally trying to make me look bad?" I was really upset at the time. I did end up going alone, but I couldn't get over how upset I felt. I was grumbling so much about Sister Xia the whole way there that I couldn't even find the gathering place and had to head back. I was feeling so down. I thought, "Am I really so useless? I can't even find a gathering place. What will our superior think of me? I've really embarrassed myself this time!" When I got back and saw the other sisters, I didn't want to talk to them.

The next day, Sister Xia and I headed over to the church separately to implement a few tasks, and I was once again thrown into emotional turmoil. I was thinking, "I don't care what you think you're made of, let's see who does best!" I arrived at the church in full swing and got straight down to

implementing the tasks, fellowshiping and delegating tasks at once. I thought, “This time I’ve really put a lot of effort in. It’ll certainly bear fruit, and then I’ll come out ahead of Sister Xia.” In a co-workers’ meeting later, I found out that I’d achieved the least in my duty. I had never even dreamed that that could happen. I lost all hope at that moment and felt that however hard I worked, I would never be able to outdo Sister Xia. Over that period of time, seeing our superior being caring toward Sister Xia whenever she came back late, I felt like I was left out in the cold. I was really jealous of her. When I saw her doing better than me in everything and that our superior valued her highly, I felt like I’d never get to have my day in the sun again. I thought that being a group leader would be better than being a church leader. At least the brothers and sisters would look up to me and support me. I felt I’d rather be a big fish in a small pond than a small fish in a big pond. My grievances just kept pouring out. I was really resistant to being in that environment and couldn’t wait to get out of there as soon as possible. My state was deteriorating more and more. I was jealous and resentful of Sister Xia, and felt like I couldn’t stand out because of her. I also thought, “If she just made some sort of mistake in her duty and were transferred out, that would be great.”

As I was constantly living in this state of fighting for reputation and personal interests, without reflecting on myself at all, God’s discipline came upon me before long. Once, I arranged to have a gathering with a few other leaders. Not only did no one show, but on my way back I got a flat tire, and before long, I developed a terrible pain in my back. Achy and swollen, the pain was hard to bear. It got to the point that I couldn’t even do my duty. I then thought of God’s words: **“The requirement made of you today—to work together in harmony—is similar to the service Jehovah required of the Israelites: Otherwise, just stop doing service”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The

Appearance and Work of God. Serve As the Israelites Did). This scared me. Could it be that God wanted to strip me of the chance to do my duty? I later read another passage from God's words: **"The more you struggle, the more darkness will surround you, and the more jealousy and hatred you will feel, and your desire to obtain will only grow stronger. The stronger your desire to obtain, the less capable you will be to do so, and as you obtain less, your hatred will increase. As your hatred increases, you will grow darker inside. The darker you are inside, the more poorly you will perform your duty; the more poorly you perform your duty, the less useful you will be. This is an interlinked, vicious cycle. If you can never perform your duty well, then, gradually, you will be eliminated"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Give Your True Heart to God, and You Can Obtain the Truth). God's stern words left me frightened and trembling. I could feel God's righteous disposition which tolerates no offense. Particularly when I read this from God's words, **"If you can never perform your duty well, then, gradually, you will be eliminated,"** I really felt that I was in imminent danger. Soon after that, I heard Sister Xia saying, "The church's work is really going downhill in every way...." She was so concerned that she started crying. I then recalled our superior dissecting the essence of our failure to work well together, saying it was disrupting and sabotaging the work of God's house. I didn't dare continue thinking about that, but just rushed to come before God in prayer and seeking. I had known full well that seeking name and status and being jealous of others isn't in line with God's will, so why couldn't I stop myself from pursuing those evil things?

I later read another passage of God's words. **"Satan uses fame and gain to control man's thoughts, until all people can think of is fame and gain. They struggle for fame and gain, suffer hardships for fame and**

gain, endure humiliation for fame and gain, sacrifice everything they have for fame and gain, and they will make any judgment or decision for the sake of fame and gain. In this way, Satan binds people with invisible shackles, and they have neither the strength nor the courage to throw them off. They unknowingly bear these shackles and trudge ever onward with great difficulty. For the sake of this fame and gain, mankind shuns God and betrays Him and becomes increasingly wicked. In this way, therefore, one generation after another is destroyed in the midst of Satan's fame and gain. Looking now at Satan's actions, are its sinister motives not utterly detestable? Maybe today you still cannot see through Satan's sinister motives because you think one cannot live without fame and gain. You think that if people leave fame and gain behind, they will no longer be able to see the way ahead, no longer be able to see their goals, that their futures will become dark, dim and gloomy" (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique VI). I was able to find the root of the problem in the revelations of God's words. I could never stop myself from going after reputation and status because I'd been educated in school and influenced by society since I was little. Satanic philosophies and fallacies had been planted deep within my heart, just like "Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost," "Stand out above the rest, and bring honor to your ancestors," "There can only be one alpha male," "Man struggles upwards; water flows downwards," and "A man leaves his name behind wherever he stays, just as a goose utters its cry wherever it flies." I had taken those things as words to live by and had set them as life goals to pursue. Whether out in the world or in God's house, I just sought the high regard of others. I wanted to be front and center no matter what group I was in, to have everyone revolve around me. I felt that was the only meaningful way to live. My caliber was never

that great, and I wasn't particularly good at anything, either, but I just couldn't stand being below someone else. When someone was better than me, I got really upset, and I couldn't stop myself from vying and competing with them. I'd try to think of anything to get ahead. If I couldn't, I got jealous and hated them, and blamed everyone but myself. That was such an awful way to live. I finally saw that pursuing name and status is not the right path at all, and the more I did that, the more arrogant and small-minded I'd become. I'd become more selfish and vicious without any semblance of a human likeness. Then I looked at Sister Xia: She did her duty conscientiously and seriously, and her fellowship contained light. She was also able to resolve brothers' and sisters' practical difficulties. That was beneficial for others and for the church's work. It was a wonderful thing and something that could bring God comfort. I, on the other hand, was petty and jealous, always thinking that she was stealing the limelight from me, so I became biased against her. I was dying for her to do her duty badly and be replaced. I saw how malicious I was deep down! God hopes to see more people pursuing the truth and being considerate of His will, and being able to do their duty to satisfy Him. But in my effort to safeguard my own reputation and position, I couldn't tolerate brothers and sisters who did that. I was jealous and intolerant of them. Wasn't that going against God and opposing Him? Wasn't that disrupting the work of God's house? How was I any different from the devil, Satan? Plus there are all those Communist Party officials who form cliques and engage in petty struggles for reputation and position, and will stop at nothing to strike down an opponent, eradicating their enemies and oppressing the people. There's no telling how many evils they've caused, how many people they've killed! Ultimately, they bring ruin on themselves, and when they die they go to hell and are punished. Why is it, then, that they end up that way? Isn't it because they

place reputation and position over everything? Then looking at my own behavior, even though it wasn't as bad as theirs, it was essentially the same. I was living according to satanic philosophies and laws, and the disposition I revealed was arrogant, cunning, and vicious. What I lived out was demonic, without any human likeness. How could that not be disgusting and hateful to God? Being disciplined that way was God's righteous disposition coming upon me, and even more, it was His salvation for me. Realizing all of this, I quickly came before God in prayer. I said, "Oh God, I haven't been pursuing the truth. I've just been pursuing name and status. I've been toyed with and corrupted by Satan, not feeling like a human being at all. When I lost my reputation and status, I didn't want to do my duty anymore and was on the verge of betraying You. God, I wish to repent to You. I'm willing to pursue the truth, to cooperate with my sister, and to be grounded in my duty to satisfy You."

After that, I opened up to Sister Xia. I dissected the ways I'd been vying for name and gain and trying to compete with her. I also asked her to keep an eye on me and help me out. After that, we were able to cooperate in our duty much more smoothly. Even though at times I still show a desire for name and gain, I'm able to quickly see that it's my satanic disposition showing itself, I think of the nature and consequences of continuing on like that, and then I rush to pray to God and mindfully collect my thoughts. I go and listen to my sister's fellowship in earnest and learn from her strengths. When I see that she's missed something in her fellowship, I chime in right away. At those times, I think about how to clearly fellowship the truth so that everyone can benefit from it. Everyone feels that those kinds of gatherings are really edifying and I gain something from them, too. I feel free and at ease within my heart. It's just as God's words say: **"If you can fulfill your responsibilities, perform your obligations and duties, set**

aside your selfish desires, set aside your own intents and motives, have consideration for God's will, and put the interests of God and His house first, then after experiencing this for a while, you will feel that this is a good way to live. It is living straightforwardly and honestly, without being a base person or a good-for-nothing, and living justly and honorably rather than being narrow-minded or mean. You will feel that this is how a person should live and act. Gradually, the desire within your heart to gratify your own interests will lessen. ... you feel there is meaning and nourishment in living thus. Your spirit will be grounded, at peace and gratified. Such a state will be yours, as a result of your having let go of your own motives, interests, and selfish desires. You will have earned it" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Give Your True Heart to God, and You Can Obtain the Truth). I fully appreciate how wonderful it is to live by God's words. Thanks be to God!

37. God's Words Have Shaken My Spirit Awake

By Nannan, USA

Almighty God says, **“In God’s current stage of work in these, the last days, He no longer just bestows grace and blessings on man like He did before, nor does He coax man to move forward. During this stage of work, what has man seen from all the aspects of God’s work that he has experienced? Man has seen God’s love and God’s judgment and chastisement. During this period of time, God provides for, supports, enlightens and guides man, so that man gradually comes to know His intentions, to know the words He speaks and the truth He bestows on man. ... The judgment and chastisement of God allow people to gradually come to know mankind’s corruption and satanic essence. That which God provides, His enlightenment of man and His guidance all allow mankind to know more and more the essence of truth, and to increasingly know what people need, what road they should take, what they live for, the value and meaning of their lives, and how to walk the road ahead. ... When man’s heart is revived, man no longer wishes to live with a degenerate, corrupt disposition, but wishes instead to pursue the truth in order to satisfy God. When man’s heart has been awakened, man is then able to tear himself fully away from Satan. No longer will he be harmed by Satan, no longer controlled or fooled by it. Instead, man can proactively cooperate in God’s work and His words to satisfy the heart of God, thus attaining fear of God and shunning evil. This is the original purpose of God’s work”** (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique VI). I have some experience of this passage of God’s words.

In June of 2016, I was assigned to do my duty on the English recitation team, and was feeling really happy, because I was finally going to get to put my English skills to work. My skills would be on full display! I couldn't wait to tell my brothers and sisters back home, and let them know the good news. I even fantasized about the envious looks on their faces when they learned of it.

After I started on the duty, I noticed that the other brothers and sisters read English really fluently and had great pronunciation. They would often speak with each other in English, and even during gatherings and while fulfilling duties, they would communicate all in English. My English was not nearly as good as theirs. I felt both envious and anxious, but I said to myself: As long as I study hard, one day I'll be as good as or even better than them! So I started getting up extra early and staying up extra late to study English and memorize vocabulary. I was constantly thinking about how I could improve my work performance. Whenever I heard anyone sharing their work experience, I'd get out my pen and start taking notes. But in no time many months had passed, and I was still progressing the slowest and performing the worst of everyone on the team. Knowing that I wasn't fulfilling my duties, and that I often had to get tips and help from younger brothers and sisters, plus the fact that the team leader often assigned me menial, routine work during that time, left me feeling like I was totally dispensable to the team. I became really dejected and upset. Later on, a new sister came to work on our team. She was unfamiliar with our team's duties, so I was asked to help her. I secretly rejoiced that I wasn't the least skilled one on our team anymore. But to my surprise this sister was talented and a quick study, so her English rapidly improved. Within two or three months, she was already outperforming me. This made me panic: "At this rate, I'm soon going to be the worst member of our team again. It is understandable

that I'm not performing as well as other members who have been working for longer. Now this rookie has come in and I'm asked to help her, but in no time at all she is already better than me. It was humiliating!" I was living day-to-day competing for status and prestige and I constantly felt uneasy. I passed my days in utter misery. I started to miss the old days fulfilling duties in my hometown. I used to be the one leading discussions and planning. My brothers and sisters all agreed with my views and the church leaders held me in high favor. I used to be someone important, but now I'd fallen so low. The more I thought about it, the more aggrieved and wronged I felt. One time, I ended up hiding in the bathroom and crying. That night, in my bed I kept tossing and turning and couldn't get to sleep. I couldn't stop thinking, "I've been the worst member of my team since day one. What must the other brothers and sisters think of me? I don't want to stay here." But then I thought about how I had made a solemn oath to God, to expend myself for Him to repay His love for as long as I live. If I were really to abandon my duties, wouldn't I be going back on my promise? Wouldn't I be cheating and betraying God? I felt so upset, and so I prayed to God, I said: "Dear God, I'm not sure how to get through this situation or what to learn from it. Please guide and enlighten me."

After that, I went on my phone and read this passage of God's words: **"In your seeking, you have too many individual notions, hopes, and futures. The current work is in order to deal with your desire for status and your extravagant desires. Hopes, status, and notions are all classic representations of satanic disposition. The reason that these things exist in people's hearts is entirely because Satan's poison is always corroding people's thoughts, and always people are unable to shake off these temptations of Satan. They are living in the midst of sin yet do not believe it to be sin, and still they think: 'We believe in God, so He must**

bestow blessings on us and arrange everything for us appropriately. We believe in God, so we must be superior to others, and we must have more status and more of a future than anyone else. Since we believe in God, He must give us limitless blessings. Otherwise, it wouldn't be called believing in God.' For many years, the thoughts that people have relied upon for their survival have been corroding their hearts to the point that they have become treacherous, cowardly, and despicable. Not only do they lack willpower and resolve, but they have also become greedy, arrogant, and willful. They are utterly lacking any resolve that transcends the self, and even more, they don't have a bit of courage to shake off the strictures of these dark influences. People's thoughts and lives are so rotten that their perspectives on believing in God are still unbearably hideous, and even when people speak of their perspectives on belief in God it is simply unbearable to hear. People are all cowardly, incompetent, despicable, and fragile. They do not feel disgust for the forces of darkness, and they do not feel love for the light and the truth; instead, they do their utmost to expel them" (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Why Are You Unwilling to Be a Foil?). God's words perfectly explained my situation! Wasn't I in so much pain and even resisting fulfilling my duties and wanting to abandon my duties and betray God because my desire for status hadn't been satisfied? Ever since I joined the team, the reason I'd been studying English so hard to improve my work performance was that I just wanted to prove myself and stand out on the team. Seeing the new sister improve so quickly, I worried that she would outperform me, and that I would once again be the worst on the team. I spent all day stressing out about status and lived in utter misery. Looking at God's words **"the thoughts that people have relied upon for their survival have been corroding their hearts,"** I asked myself: "Why am I

striving for status? What thoughts are causing me all this misery?” Only after pondering God’s words did I realize that I was living according to satanic maxims like “Stand out above the rest, and bring honor to your ancestors,” “Man struggles upwards; water flows downwards,” and “In all the universe, only I reign supreme.” From a young age we are taught by our teachers to excel, to be the best of the best. I always really looked up to and envied prestigious and famous people, and I wanted to be just like them. Wherever I was, I’d always wanted people to think highly of me, and if they all admired, supported and praised me, then even better. I thought this was the way to live an enjoyable and worthwhile life. When I didn’t win the admiration and praise of others, life was miserable, and I would feel so down. After I began fulfilling my duties in God’s house, I still pursued these things. But when I didn’t see much improvement or win the others’ praise and admiration, I became pessimistic, dejected and disheartened. I even thought about abandoning my duties and betraying God. I had become completely consumed by my obsession with prestige. I would suffer any hardship and fight any battle to attain it, to the point where my whole world revolved around this one thing. It was then that I realized I was striving after the wrong thing. I wasn’t fulfilling my duties to pursue the truth and repay God’s love, I was only doing so to satisfy my own desire for prestige and status.

The revelations in God’s words showed me how my pursuit was misguided. Later, I read this passage of God’s words: **“For each of you fulfilling your duty, no matter how profoundly you understand the truth, if you wish to enter truth reality, then the simplest way to practice is to think of the interests of God’s house in everything you do, and to let go of your selfish desires, your individual intent, motives, prestige, and status. Put the interests of God’s house first—this is the**

least you should do. ... In addition, if you can fulfill your responsibilities, perform your obligations and duties, set aside your selfish desires, set aside your own intents and motives, have consideration for God's will, and put the interests of God and His house first, then after experiencing this for a while, you will feel that this is a good way to live. It is living straightforwardly and honestly, without being a base person or a good-for-nothing, and living justly and honorably rather than being narrow-minded or mean. You will feel that this is how a person should live and act. Gradually, the desire within your heart to gratify your own interests will lessen" (The Word, Vol.

3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Give Your True Heart to God, and You Can Obtain the Truth). After reading God's words, I realized that being admired by others isn't important. Submitting to God's sovereignty and plans, upholding the work of God's house, practicing the truth and fulfilling one's duties—this is what's really important, and this is how to live openly and honestly. After I understood God's will, I felt a great sense of release. I was still the worst-performing member of our team, but I didn't feel so bad about it anymore. And when something hurt my prestige and status, I wasn't as weak as I had been. I would consciously pray to God and forsake my wrong motives, and I was able to settle down and fulfill my duties. But Satan's venom had taken root deep within me and become my very nature. Just understanding was not enough to uproot it. I still needed to experience more judgment and refinement to be cleansed and changed.

Our team leader assigned Sisters Liu and Zhang to supervise our work because they both had strong professional skill sets. I was both envious and jealous. It seemed like such a mark of prestige to coach other brothers and sisters. Why couldn't I be like them? All I could do was the busy work that didn't take any skill. Later on, I was recommended to do the duty of

watering in the team helping others to resolve their difficulties. But I wasn't at all excited about this prospect and even looked down on this duty. It seemed to me that only people with no real skills got assigned to this duty. If our team performed well, everyone would say it was all because of those two sisters. Who would ever notice me working behind the scenes, fellowshipping on the truth to resolve problems? Because I had the wrong mindset and couldn't gain the work of the Holy Spirit, I just couldn't feel motivated to fulfill my duties and sometimes thought to myself: "Why doesn't my caliber measure up to everyone else's? What am I good at? When will I get to put my skills on full display?" Gradually, I began feeling more and more resistant and agitated. Pretty soon, whenever Sister Zhang asked me to close a door or open a window, I felt like losing my temper. I thought: "How long have you been a believer? You're just a little bit better at skills, that's all. Does that qualify you to boss me around?" In the end, I just ignored Sister Zhang when she spoke with me. Sometimes when she asked me a question, I would just pretend that I hadn't heard her. If I did respond, it wasn't said nicely. When I saw that she was feeling restrained as a result, I did feel bad, but when it came to matters of status and prestige, I still let my emotions get the best of me.

One morning I saw Sister Liu and Sister Zhang going out on a work assignment. They looked really classy and fashionable in their outfits, I became upset and got jealous of them. I thought to myself, "You guys get all the glory while I'm left to toil thanklessly here behind the scenes. No one will ever know how hard I work." When the sisters came back that night, everyone else in our team rushed over to greet them, and some even got dinner ready for them. At first, I also wanted to go greet them and ask how things had gone with their work, but when I saw how everyone reacted to them, I got jealous again, and thought: "You two are getting all the glory

once again and now I look even more worthless.” With that thought, I turned and went right back to my room. I couldn’t settle myself down and so I prayed to God. I said: “Dear God, my obsession with status has once again reared its ugly head. I want to let go of my desire for prestige and status but I just can’t. Please show me how to free myself from the bonds of reputation and status.”

The next day, one of the sisters saw I was in a bad state and read me the following passage: **“As soon as it touches upon position, face, or reputation, everyone’s heart leaps in anticipation, and each of you always wants to stand out, be famous, and be recognized. Everyone is unwilling to yield, always instead wishing to contend—even though contending is embarrassing and not allowed in God’s house. However, without contention, you still are not content. When you see someone stand out, you feel jealous, hatred, and that it is unfair. ‘Why can’t I stand out? Why is it always that person who gets to stand out, and it’s never my turn?’ You then feel some resentment. You try to repress it, but you cannot. You pray to God and feel better for a while, but then as soon as you encounter this sort of situation again, you cannot overcome it. Does this not display an immature stature? Is not a person’s falling into such states a trap? These are the shackles of Satan’s corrupt nature that bind humans”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Give Your True Heart to God, and You Can Obtain the Truth). God’s words showed me that I hadn’t really changed what I pursued. I still sought reputation, status and to excel above others. Possessed by these things, I always wanted to stand out and be noticed, and to do duties that were important or that required skill. I thought this was the only way I would be respected and valued by others, and be approved and ultimately blessed by God. I was dismissive of any job I thought unimportant and even looked upon my

watering duties with disdain. Seeing how the two sisters were assigned important duties while I was just given trifling tasks that would never be noticed, I felt jealous and resentful, and would even complain, blaming God for not giving me a better caliber or skills. How unreasonable I was! Because my desire for status hadn't been satisfied, I didn't put much effort into my duty, and would even blow up on my sisters to vent my dissatisfaction. This was no doubt restraining and hurtful to my sisters. The more I reflected on this, the guiltier I felt. I realized how selfish and lacking in humanity I'd been.

Later, I came upon this passage of God's words: **"People always want to have renown or be celebrities; they wish to gain great fame and prestige, and to bring honor to their ancestors. Are these positive things? These are not at all in line with positive things; moreover, they run counter to the law of God's having dominion over the fate of mankind. Why would I say that? What kind of person does God want? Does He want a person of greatness, a celebrity, a noble person, or a world-shaking person? (No.) So, then, what kind of person does God want? He wants a person with their feet firmly on the ground who seeks to be a qualified creature of God, who can fulfill the duty of a creature, and who can keep to a human's place"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Corrupt Dispositions Can Only Be Resolved by Seeking the Truth and Relying on God). Reflecting on God's words, I realized that God doesn't want noble people or earth-shattering talents, but grounded people who can fulfill their duties as creatures of God. God doesn't require me to have a great caliber or top-notch professional skills, He only asks that I keep to my place and do my best to fulfill my duties. And this was something I could do. God gives every person a different caliber and different talents. As long

as we make the best of our abilities, help each other and work together, we'll fulfill our duties and satisfy God.

I also read these words of God: **“I decide the destination of each person not on the basis of age, seniority, amount of suffering, and least of all, the degree to which they invite pity, but according to whether they possess the truth. There is no other choice but this. You must realize that all those who do not follow the will of God shall also be punished. This is an immutable fact”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Prepare Sufficient Good Deeds for Your Destination). God is a righteous God; who God commends, and what ending and destination He sets for each person is not based on whether they have prestige or renown, how many people support and approve of them or what they have to draw on. Rather, it's all based on whether they practice the truth, submit to God, and fulfill their duties as God's creatures. Take the chief priests, scribes and Pharisees, for example. They had status and influence, many people idolized and followed them, but when the Lord Jesus came to do His work, they didn't seek the truth or accept God's work at all. They even wildly condemned and resisted the Lord Jesus to protect their own status and income, ultimately nailing Him to the cross and suffering God's curses and punishment. I also thought of Noah—he built the ark as God instructed. At the time, everyone thought he was crazy, but because he listened to God and obeyed Him, he received God's commendation and survived the flood. Then there was the poor widow in the Bible. The two coins she gave might not have seemed like much to anyone else, but God commended her, because she gave everything she had to God. Reflecting on these stories, I saw that God is truly righteous. God values people's sincerity. Only by listening to God's word, submitting to God, practicing God's words and fulfilling one's duty as a creature of God can one live a life of meaning. Striving to be praised by

others will only lead us to do evil, resist God and receive His punishment. I realized that God hadn't arranged for me to do my duty in that environment because He wanted me to suffer or be humiliated, but because He had a plan for me. I was just too obsessed with status, and so I had to experience being exposed and refined in order to really know myself, and to cast off the fetters of prestige and status and live a free and unrestrained life before God. This was the best way for God to transform and purify me, it was God's love and salvation. At this thought, I prayed to God, "O God, thank You for elaborately arranging these environments to save and cleanse me. I no longer want to live for prestige and status, no matter what duty I'm assigned, no matter how lowly it is in the eyes of others, I'm willing to submit and work together with my brothers and sisters to fulfill our duties."

Later on, my team needed some people to go out for church affairs. When I heard about it, desire once again welled up inside me. I thought maybe I'd finally get a chance to show myself. While my brothers and sisters were deciding who would go, I kept hoping I'd be chosen, but in the end it was decided to send Sister Liu and Sister Zhang. I felt a bit disappointed. It seemed I'd never have my moment in the sun. I realized I was once again contending for fame, and so I prayed to God and let go of my wrong motives. I thought about how all this time I hadn't been focusing on my work, but had wasted all this valuable time and energy contending for status, and hadn't fulfilled my duties in the least. I fought for fame and status every day, and it was a truly awful feeling. It felt as if I'd been tricked by Satan. Status and prestige can really damage people. Actually, all the brothers and sisters on our team have different skills and calibers. God arranged for us to work together because He wanted each of us to put our skills to use, learn from and complement each other and work well together to fulfill our duties. God decided my caliber and stature long ago. What role

I play on the team and what function I serve were also preordained by God. So I should just be happy where I am, do the best that I can to fulfill my duty, and be a sensible person who is able to submit to God. After realizing this, I felt much more relaxed. Whenever the two sisters went out for their duty, I would just pray for them and do my best to complete all the routine work so the other sisters could focus on doing their own duties. I also urged my brothers and sisters to attend to their spiritual devotionals so that they would also find time for life entry on top of work. When I started doing things attentively, I felt more grounded and peaceful. I felt I'd grown closer to God and my relationships with my brothers and sisters also normalized. I no longer placed so much importance on prestige and status and I became more open. My heart was full of gratitude to God for this small transformation. It was the judgment and chastisement of God's words that had awoken my heart, shown me the emptiness and suffering of seeking fame and status, and helped me understand that only by believing in God, pursuing the truth and fulfilling a creation's duty can we live a meaningful life!

38. Finding Freedom From Status

By Dong En, France

I became a church leader in 2019. I did things my own way, was irresponsible in my duty, and I didn't assign the right people to the right tasks, which all had an impact on church life. I was filled with remorse. I therefore resolved to get a good handle on church work. Back then, there were two group leaders who were to be reassigned, but I couldn't find anyone suitable to replace them. I was consumed with worry, and thought, "If I can't find anyone fit for these posts, my leader will say that I'm unable to do practical work. What if I end up being replaced?" I racked my brains and then thought of Sister Zhang: She was of good caliber and was good at her duty. She'd be great as a group leader. At this thought, I heaved a sigh of relief. I felt like I'd found someone to fill that post, and that my work would get easier now with the right person in the job.

Just at that moment, however, Sister Li, a leader in another church, called me up and said her church had a large influx of new converts without enough people to water them. She wanted to talk to me about the possibility of assigning Sister Zhang to her church to take charge of watering the new converts. I was absolutely dead set against this idea. "What about our church?" I thought. "What will we do if Sister Zhang is assigned elsewhere? If I can't find anyone else to be group leader and I can't get a handle on this work, I could end up being replaced!" Noticing that I wasn't saying anything, Sister Li said, "Most people in your church are longtime believers and are grounded in their faith. If Sister Zhang is transferred, you can always just train someone else. Your work won't be too impacted." I really didn't want to hear this and felt very resistant. I thought, "You're making light of it, as if training someone is that easy!" I knew that Sister

Li's church needed help, but I was under the control of my corrupt disposition. No matter what she said, I refused to give her what she wanted. I blamed her, too, thinking she was being selfish and thinking only of her own church. Seeing how resistant I was to the idea, Sister Li stopped insisting. After the call I felt very restless and I resolved to myself that I wouldn't give in, that I wouldn't give Sister Zhang up no matter who asked. The next day, my leader came to talk to me about this issue. I went on and on about how our church was short of people and all the difficulties we were facing. I talked and talked about our difficulties so that the leader wouldn't have a leg to stand on. Finally, there was nothing she could say, and she didn't press the issue. I felt pleased at this: I could keep Sister Zhang. That evening, I met with some deacons to discuss promoting Sister Zhang. I failed to mention the difficulties Sister Li was facing in her church, however, or that our own leader had come to ask for Sister Zhang to be reassigned. Because I hadn't told them everything that had happened, they all agreed to Sister Zhang becoming group leader. Just as I was feeling pleased with myself, our leader made a surprise visit to talk with me and my work partner. Finally, it had been decided that, according to the needs of the work, Sister Zhang was to be reassigned. Seeing everyone agree to this left me unable to object, but I really wasn't happy about it; I felt like someone had cut off my right arm. Over the next couple of days, I got really upset when this whole affair came to mind. I didn't much feel like doing my duty, either. I would lie in bed at night, tossing and turning, unable to sleep a wink, turning this matter over and over in my mind. Finally, I said a prayer to God: "Dear God, I've been unwilling to let Sister Zhang go just to protect my own position. I just can't let go of it. Dear God, please guide me and lead me through this situation. Please make me able to let go of myself and come to know myself a little."

After I said this prayer, I read this in God's words: **"People rarely practice the truth; they often turn their backs on the truth, and live in corrupt satanic dispositions that are selfish and vile. They look out for their own prestige, reputation, status, and interests, and they have not gained the truth. Their suffering is therefore great, their worries many, and their fetters numerous"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Life Entry Must Begin With the Experience of Performing One's Duty). **"Cruel mankind! The connivance and intrigue, the snatching and grabbing one from another, the scramble for fame and fortune, the mutual slaughter—when will it ever end? Despite the hundreds of thousands of words God has spoken, no one has come to their senses. People act for the sake of their families, sons and daughters, for their careers, future prospects, position, vainglory, and money, for the sake of food, clothing, and the flesh. But is there anyone whose actions are truly for the sake of God? Even among those who act for the sake of God, there are but few who know God. How many people do not act out of their own interests? How many do not oppress or ostracize others in order to protect their own position?"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Wicked Will Surely Be Punished). God's words pierced my heart. God revealed the ugliness of mankind's corruption by Satan, people's infighting for the sake of fame and fortune—this was precisely my state. I thought about what I'd revealed in this Sister Zhang issue. In order to protect my position as leader, I'd disregarded the work of God's house as a whole, afraid that if we lost Sister Zhang, then the work of our church would be impacted and I'd lose my position as leader. That's why when my leader came to ask for Sister Zhang, I'd come up with all manner of reasons to refuse. I called the shots and took the lead in arranging Sister Zhang's duties. I tried to trick Sister Li and my leader and schemed to pull the wool over the eyes of the deacons. I

went to great lengths and racked my brains to protect my own fame, fortune, and status. How selfish, despicable, and deceitful I was! That made me think of wild beasts in the animal kingdom. They fight and kill each other over territory and food, and the strongest come out on top. Then there was me: By vying for control over people and trying to protect my position, I'd become like a wild beast, totally without humanity. I realized how frightful my behavior had been. Though I appeared to be bearing a burden and considering the work of our church, what I was really considering deep down was my own position. Just as God's words reveal: **"How many people do not act out of their own interests? How many do not oppress or ostracize others in order to protect their own position?"** From start to finish, I'd been trying to control Sister Zhang, unwilling to let her go. I'd thought of her as a member of our church, and that we should have say over her duty. I had to be in charge and no one was allowed to interfere. I saw just how arrogant I'd been. I'd lost my humanity and sense, plain and simple! Just then, I thought about when I'd preached the gospel to religious people, the pastors saw that many members of their congregations were accepting God's work of the last days and that their positions were becoming untenable. They did everything they could to stop people from investigating the true way. They not only attacked those who spread the gospel, but even shamelessly claimed believers as their own flock, and that no one was going to steal them away. I realized then that my behavior was, in essence, no different from those pastors' behavior. In order to maintain my position and livelihood, I'd wanted to keep the brothers and sisters under my control and I wouldn't allow God's house to reassign them elsewhere. I'd been trying to seize God's sheep and vie with God over these people! At this thought, I began to feel afraid. Trembling with fear, I went

before God and prayed: “Dear God, I’ve done wrong. I’ve resisted You and I wish to repent to You.”

Not long afterward, God once again arranged a situation to test me. A leader in another church sent a message asking urgently for someone who could take charge of document editing work. She’d heard that Sister Chen in our church was good at it and took on responsibility for her duty, so she asked if Sister Chen was able to take on this position. I knew very well that Sister Chen would be perfect for it, but she was an evangelist in our church, and she was great at that, too. What would happen if Sister Chen was transferred and our gospel work suffered as a result? What if I ended up being dealt with by the leader as being unable to do practical work? I may not even be able to keep my position. I decided it was better if they just found someone else, so I intentionally neglected to reply to that leader’s message. Then it suddenly occurred to me, “I wasn’t willing to hand Sister Zhang over before in order to protect my own position. I can’t be so obstructive this time.” But I still felt really pained and conflicted. I thought, “Why am I so resistant whenever someone needs to be reassigned? I’m always worrying about our work being affected and losing my position. How can I break free of the fetters and constraints of fame, fortune, and status?” I then said a silent prayer to God, asking Him to guide me and lead me to understand the essence of my pursuit for status and to help me forsake my flesh and practice the truth.

During my devotionals, I read this passage of God’s words: **“The essence of the behavior of antichrists is to constantly use various means and methods to achieve their goal of having status, of winning people over and making them follow and venerate them. It is possible that in the depths of their hearts they are not deliberately vying over humanity with God, but one thing is certain: Even when they do not vie with God**

for humans, they still wish to have status and power among them. Even if the day comes when they realize that they are vying with God for status, and they rein themselves in, they still employ other methods to gain status among people and be validated. In short, though everything antichrists do appears to comprise a faithful performance of their duties, and they seem to be true followers of God, their ambition to control people—and to gain status and power among them—will never change. No matter what God says or does, and no matter what He asks of people, they do not do what they should do or fulfill their duties in a way that befits His words and requirements, nor do they give up their pursuit of power and status as a result of understanding His utterances and the truth; throughout, their ambition consumes them, controls and directs their behavior and thoughts, and determines the path they walk. This is the epitome of an antichrist. What is emphasized here? Some people ask, ‘Are antichrists not those who vie with God to gain people, and who do not recognize Him?’ They may recognize God, they may genuinely recognize and believe in His existence, and they may be willing to follow Him and pursue the truth, but one thing will never change: They will never relinquish their ambition for power and status, nor will they give up their pursuit of those things due to their environments or God’s attitude toward them. These are the characteristics of antichrists. However much a person has suffered, however much of the truth they have understood, however many truth realities they have entered, and however much knowledge of God they possess, beyond these external phenomena and manifestations, they will never rein in or relinquish their ambition for, and pursuit of, status and power, and this determines precisely their nature essence. There is not the slightest inaccuracy in God’s defining such people as antichrists; it

has been determined by their very nature essence” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. For Leaders and Workers, Choosing a Path Is of Utmost Importance (3)). God revealed the nature and characteristics of antichrists as cherishing power and status and taking those things as their reason for living. The root and motivation for their every action is the desire for fame, fortune, and status, so much so that they even take God’s sheep as their own, oppose God, and absolutely refuse to repent, until finally they are exposed and eliminated. I began to feel afraid as I contemplated God’s words. I really cherished my status. That first time, I’d refused to allow Sister Zhang to be reassigned in order to protect my position. Now this time, I was unwilling to let Sister Chen go for the sake of my own position. All I thought about was my status and I showed God’s will no consideration whatsoever, much less did I think about the work of God’s house. I was determined to keep my position, even at the expense of the work of God’s house, and was even capable of vying with God over people for the sake of my own status. Where was my reverence for God? My faith was not in God; I had placed my faith in status and power, and wasn’t that the nature of an antichrist? I knew perfectly well that Sister Chen was good at editing documents and that she enjoyed that kind of work. But in order to protect my own position, I hadn’t asked her for her opinion nor assigned her to a suitable duty in line with her strengths, but had instead acted like her master and refused to let her go do her duty in another church. I was treating the church like my own territory and no one was going to be reassigned without my say-so. Wasn’t I trying to cage and control people, just like an antichrist? To keep a firm hold on my position, I tried to keep the brothers and sisters with caliber and strengths in my church. I treated them like they were my own property and ruled over them, wanting more people to toil for the sake of my own position. God really loathed this ambition of mine and I

deserved to be cursed! I saw that my views on pursuit hadn't changed in all my years of faith in God, that I was tightly fettered by fame, fortune, and status, and that I was walking the path of the antichrists. An antichrist I'd known before then came to mind. He had always pursued fame, fortune, and status and, once he became a leader, he tried to consolidate his position by keeping people under his control and trying to establish his own independent fiefdom. He did not accept the truth whatsoever and acted like a dictator. He caused severe disruptions to the work of God's house, and in the end he was exposed and eliminated. I realized that the pursuit of fame, fortune, and status was the path of the antichrists that would lead down into hell! God arranged situations to expose me again and again to make me recognize my own satanic nature and see that I was on the wrong path so that I would turn back in time. These situations were a judgment upon me, but even more than that, they were God's great love and salvation! As I pondered the painstaking efforts God had gone to, I began to yield and I no longer felt resistant to such situations. I felt that everything God arranged was precisely what I needed. I wanted to truly repent and experience those situations with a submissive heart.

I later read two passages of God's words. **“What is duty? A duty is not managed by you—it is not your own career or your own work; instead, it is God's work. God's work requires your cooperation, which gives rise to your duty. The part of God's work with which man must cooperate is his duty. The duty is a portion of God's work—it is not your career, not your domestic affairs nor your personal affairs in life. Whether your duty is to deal with external or internal affairs, it is the work of the house of God, it forms one part of God's management plan, and it is the commission God has given to you. It is not your personal business”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only by Seeking the

Truth Principles Can One Perform Their Duty Well). **“Whatever duty you perform, you should do it in accordance with God’s requirements. For example, if you have been chosen to be a church leader, then church leadership is your duty—how should you do it if you see it as your duty? (In line with God’s requirements.) Working in line with God’s requirements is a general way of putting it. What are the specific details? First, you must know that this is a duty, not an office. It will cause problems if you think you have assumed an office. However, if you say, ‘I’ve been chosen to be a church leader, so I need to be a grade lower than others; all of you are higher up than I am and greater than I am,’ then this, too, is an incorrect attitude; if you do not understand the truth, then no amount of pretense will do you any good. Rather, you must have a proper understanding of it. Firstly, you must know that this duty is very important. A church has dozens of members, and you must think about how to bring these people before God and enable a majority of them to understand the truth and enter truth reality. Furthermore, with weak, passive people, you must strive to make them stop being weak and passive so that they can actively fulfill their duties, and as to all those who are able to fulfill their duties, you should make them do so and perform to their utmost. Make them understand the truths related to fulfilling one’s duties so that they are not slipshod in fulfilling them, they fulfill them well, and they can have a normal relationship with God. There are also those who cause disruption and disturbances, or those who have believed in God for many years but have an evil humanity; of these people, you should deal with those who should be dealt with, and purge those who should be purged, making appropriate arrangements for each person according to their kind. It is also of importance that those few in the church with relatively good humanity,**

with a bit of caliber, who can take responsibility for an aspect of work, must all be cultivated. ... You must make the most of every person, taking full advantage of their individual capabilities and arranging suitable duties for them according to what they can do, the quality of their caliber, how old they are, and how long they have believed in God. You must come up with a tailor-made plan for each type of person and vary it from person to person, so that they can fulfill their duties in God's house and exert their functions to the greatest extent" (The Word,

Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. What Is the Adequate Performance of Duty?). God's words showed me that a duty is not one's own personal enterprise. Our duty comes from God, and we should perform it as He requires. Training people is something God requires leaders to do. God has prepared all manner of skilled people for His work and as a church leader, I should perform my duty in accordance with His requirements and principles. When I find someone with talent, I should train them and recommend them, so that everyone can give full play to their strengths in the right place, perform their duty, and fulfill their respective function to better expand the gospel work. Only this is in line with God's will, and it is what brothers and sisters want to do as well. Once I'd understood God's will, I sent a message to the leader of the other church confirming that I would be reassigning Sister Chen. I felt more at ease in my heart once I started to practice this way. I then saw God's blessings. Much to my surprise, in November that year, the number of converts we gained from our gospel work tripled from the previous month. I knew that this was achieved through God's work and I couldn't stop thanking and praising Him!

Before, I never felt any loathing for the corruptions of vying for fame and fortune or pursuing fame, fortune, and status. I thought that, seeing as everyone had been corrupted by Satan, then we must all have that same

disposition, and that it wasn't something that could be changed in just a couple of days. That kept me from seeking the truth to resolve the problem. By undergoing the judgment and chastisement of God's words, and by being tested and exposed, I finally came to have some discernment over the essence of pursuing those things. I saw that to pursue such things is to resist God and I began to hate myself from the bottom of my heart. I became willing to pursue the truth, repent, and change. It's all because of God's work that I am now able to forsake my flesh and put some truth into practice. Thanks be to Almighty God!

39. Living Out a Human Likeness at Last

By Zhou Hong, China

When I became a church leader in 2018, I found there was a sister surnamed Yang who had good caliber and pursued the truth. I thought to myself, “If I can train her well, it’ll make my life easier, our work will improve, and my leader will praise me, too.” So I threw myself into training her. I’d fellowship with her whenever she ran into any problem and I assigned her to be a team leader. She made fast progress and was attentive in her duty. Pretty soon, her team’s work picked up. I thought, “If I had a few more like Sister Yang, then all our church work would improve significantly. I’d be able to relax a bit and we’d see better results, and everyone would say I’m doing a good job.” One day, we urgently needed someone to compile documents on purging and expelling antichrists and evildoers. My partners and I agreed that Sister Yang should take this on. To my surprise, she soon grasped the principles and produced documents that were both objective and accurate. During this time, my leader often asked whether we had anyone who was good at putting documents together and I knew Sister Yang fit the bill. But when I thought of her being transferred and the effect it would certainly have on our work, I didn’t want to let her go and didn’t suggest her to the leader.

At a gathering one day, the leader said they needed someone to compile documents on purging and expelling antichrists and evildoers and asked us if we could supply anyone. I thought, “Sister Yang would be good at this, but if I let her go, I’ll have to train someone else. It’ll take so much effort. What will my leader think of me if our work begins to slip? Sister Tang is good at compiling documents, too, but she’s a little passive in her duty and she tends to need a lot of help. I’ll suggest her instead. This way,

I'll provide someone for the job and Sister Yang can stay put. Our work won't be impacted." So I recommended Sister Tang and talked up her strong points and intentionally made Sister Yang sound not as good. A few days later, Sister Tang was chosen for the task. I later learned that Sister Tang couldn't cope with it on her own. I thought, "Sister Yang would be able to handle it, no problem. But I don't want her to go. She's so good at her duty, what would happen to our work if she left?" So I again chose not to recommend Sister Yang. A few days after that, my leader asked specifically for Sister Yang and told us to find someone to replace her as soon as possible. I was really against this idea. I thought, "If Sister Yang leaves, who will compile our church's documents? Even if we can find someone suitable, they'll just be a newbie and won't know the principles. They'll need training. Not only will our work suffer, but it'll be hard work and a lot of effort on my part." I knew I was wrong to think this, but I kept making excuses to myself: "I trained Sister Yang myself. If she leaves, we'll have no one in our team who can do her job. How will it get done? No, I have to discuss it with my work partners and write the leader asking her to let Sister Yang stay a few more months until we've trained someone else." When I shared this with my two work partners, they rebuked me, saying, "We train people to do the work of God's house. Once Sister Yang is gone, we can train someone else. Aren't you being selfish, trying to stop Sister Yang from leaving?" But I didn't reflect on myself, and instead thought, "You're so generous. You think it's easy to train people?" I was feeling more and more upset and resistant and I resented my work partners for not being able to see my side. Shortly after that, I started to feel like I was burning up, just like I was on fire, and I felt weak all over. I thought, "The weather is fine, and I don't have a cold. This is really weird." I realized that this was God chastening and disciplining me. I thought of

God's words: **"Now, when I am at work among you, you behave in this way—if the day comes when there is no one to watch over you, will you not be as bandits who have declared themselves kings of their own little mountains?"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. A Very Serious Problem: Betrayal (1)). I was stunned to realize that God's words were revealing exactly my own state. I was treating Sister Yang like she was my property. I thought that since I'd trained her, she should be mine and she should stay in my church and put me in a good light. I wouldn't let anyone have her. In reality, brothers and sisters all do their duty in God's house and their commissions are all from God. They do their duties whenever and wherever God's house needs them to and as God arranges. And yet I'd been deceitful and cheated others for the sake of my own prestige and status, doing what I could to keep Sister Yang all to myself. Wasn't I one of the **"bandits who have declared themselves kings"**? I had tried to control Sister Yang and wrest her from God. This was what antichrists did and it was a path to ruin. Realizing this, I felt really remorseful. I was so arrogant and selfish.

I then read these words of God: **"What is the standard by which a person's deeds are judged to be good or evil? It depends on whether or not you, in your thoughts, expressions, and actions, possess the testimony of putting the truth into practice and of living out truth reality. If you do not have this reality or do not live this out, then you are without a doubt an evildoer"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Give Your True Heart to God, and You Can Obtain the Truth). **"If one believes in God but does not heed His words, accept the truth, or submit to His arrangements and orchestrations; if they only exhibit certain good behaviors, but are unable to forsake the flesh, and relinquish nothing of their pride or interests; if, though to all appearances they perform their duty, they still live by their satanic dispositions, and have not in the**

least given up the philosophies and modes of existence of Satan, and do not change—then how could they possibly believe in God? That is belief in religion. Such people forsake things and expend of themselves superficially, but the path they walk and the source and impetus of everything they do are not based on the words of God or the truth; instead, they continue to act according to their own imaginings, desires, and subjective assumptions, and the philosophies and dispositions of Satan continue to be the basis of their existence and actions. In matters whose truth they do not understand, they do not seek it; in matters whose truth they do understand, they do not practice it, exalt God as great, or treasure the truth. Though they are nominally a follower of God, it is in word only; the substance of their actions is nothing but the expression of their corrupt dispositions. There is no sign that their motive and intent are to practice the truth and act according to God’s words. People who consider their own interests before all else, who fulfill their own desires and intents first—are these people who follow God? (No.) And can people who do not follow God bring about change in their dispositions? (No.) And if they cannot change their dispositions, are they not pathetic?” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days.

Belief in Religion Will Never Lead to Salvation). I thought over God’s words and reflected on my behavior. I looked as though I made sacrifices for God, but my motive in my duty was to satisfy my own interests. When my leader asked for someone who could put documents together, I knew Sister Yang was the best one for the job. But I lied and deceived to protect my own interests, and suggested Sister Tang instead. Even when I saw Sister Tang struggling with that job and knew she would cause delays to the work, I still didn’t recommend Sister Yang. I didn’t think about God’s house or pay any mind to God’s will. I just used brothers and sisters as tools to safeguard my

own prestige and status. I was so wicked, selfish and mean. I'd believed in God for years, yet all my thoughts and views were based on my satanic dispositions and on Satan's survival tactics. I didn't go by God's words or practice the truth. I was a nonbeliever, just like what God's words describe. I couldn't be selfish anymore. I had to supply someone with talent and then train more people for our church. We arranged for someone to take on Sister Yang's work in our church and she was transferred. Later, I learned that Sister Yang had quickly compiled the documents on purging and expelling people. I felt bad when I heard this. If I'd only suggested her sooner and set my own interests aside, this work wouldn't have been delayed for so long. This had happened because of my selfishness. I'd transgressed and done evil. I took this as a warning not to prioritize my interests over God's house again.

I thought this experience had changed me a little, but this same old problem was just waiting for the right conditions before rearing its ugly head again. Not long afterward, my leader asked me about Sister Liu. She wanted her to go help out with watering new believers in a church nearby. I felt some reluctance, but I figured I shouldn't be selfish, that I had to uphold the Church's work, and I could always train someone else. I agreed to let Sister Liu go. But then she said Sister Li who was in charge of putting documents together was to be promoted and asked me to write an evaluation. This was too much for me. If Sister Li left, who would be in charge of putting documents together? I didn't want to let Sister Li go, so I put off writing her evaluation. I wanted to delay her going for a few days so that my leader might find someone else in the meantime and let Sister Li stay. My work partner noticed I wasn't writing the evaluation and pressed me to do it. I just palmed her off and said I'd get right on it, but I still didn't write it. About 10 days later, my work partner said, "Our leader has

transferred Sister Li after learning about her from others.” It took me a while to process this. This was happening too fast! All those who were of good caliber had been taken away. We wouldn’t be able to get anything done in the church now. These thoughts filled my mind to exploding. I felt like a heavy weight had settled on my heart. I had no appetite over the next few days. I just thought about how I had to find people and how much pressure was on me. It was all going to be so much effort. The more I thought about it, the more I was consumed with worry, and I was exhausted.

One day I was going down the stairs when I lost my footing. I heard a snap in my foot, like a bone breaking. I thought, “I’m finished. I can’t do my duty with a broken foot.” I knew this was God disciplining me. I thought about how I’d watched people get transferred one by one and how I’d argued with God in my heart and resisted it all. My attitude toward my duty must have disgusted God, so God had taken my duty away. I felt very afraid at this thought. My foot hurt like crazy, too. I kept praying to God, willing to truly repent. To my surprise, after lunch that day my foot suddenly stopped hurting, as though I’d never injured it at all. I knew in my heart that this had been a warning from God so that I’d reflect on and know myself. I wondered, “Why do I always put my own interests first?”

I later watched a video of a reading of God’s words. Almighty God says, **“Until people have experienced God’s work and gained the truth, it is Satan’s nature that takes charge and dominates them from within. What, specifically, does that nature entail? For example, why are you selfish? Why do you protect your own position? Why do you have such strong emotions? Why do you enjoy those unrighteous things? Why do you like those evils? What is the basis for your fondness for such things? Where do these things come from? Why are you so happy to accept them? By now, you have all come to understand that the main**

reason behind all these things is that Satan's poison is within you. As for what Satan's poison is, it can be fully expressed with words. For example, if you ask some evildoers why they committed evil, they will answer, 'Because it's every man for himself, and the devil take the hindmost.' This single phrase expresses the very root of the problem. Satan's logic has become people's lives. They may do things for this purpose or that, but they are only doing it for themselves. Everyone thinks that since it is every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost, people should live for their own sakes, and do everything in their power to secure a good position for the sake of food and fine clothing. 'Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost'—this is the life and the philosophy of man, and it also represents human nature. These words of Satan are precisely the poison of Satan, and when people internalize it, it becomes their nature. Satan's nature is exposed through these words; they represent it completely. This poison becomes people's lives as well as the foundation of their existence, and corrupted humanity has been consistently dominated by this poison for thousands of years" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. How to Walk the Path of Peter).

God's words say that after mankind was corrupted by Satan, all kinds of satanic poisons were planted in our hearts and they became our nature. Take "Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost," for example. Everyone lives by this satanic poison, everything we do is for our own profit, and we think this is right and proper, so we become more and more selfish and deceitful. I reflected on myself. When the leader transferred people out of my church, I resisted and tried to obstruct it, even to the point of deceitfulness. I treated people like they belonged to me and refused to let God's house have them. I was so selfish and despicable, totally

unreasonable. I was standing in the way of the work of God's house! When the Lord Jesus came to work, the Pharisees tried to protect their own status and livelihoods by stopping people from following Him. They treated believers as their own and vied with the Lord over them. In the end they offended God's disposition and He punished them. How was I behaving any different from the Pharisees? Brothers and sisters are God's sheep and God's house has the right to allocate them however it wishes. I had no right to interfere. As a church leader, I should do my duty as God's house requires and in line with principles, fellowship on the truth to resolve problems and train people. This was my duty, my responsibility. But I hadn't been considerate of God's will or allocated people in line with the principles. I hadn't been willing to make the effort to train more people. I hadn't volunteered those I knew to be talented, but had tried to keep them under my control, making them work and serve for my own prestige. Hadn't I been doing my own thing in opposition to God's house? I was defying God and walking the path of the antichrists. I was afraid at this thought and I thanked God for disciplining me and stopping me from doing more evil.

Later, I watched another video reading of God's words. Almighty God says, **"The emotions of mankind are selfish and belong to the world of darkness. They do not exist for the sake of the will, much less for the plan of God, and so man and God can never be spoken of in the same breath. God is forever supreme and ever honorable, while man is forever base, forever worthless. This is because God is forever making sacrifices and devoting Himself to mankind; man, however, forever takes and strives only for himself. God is forever taking pains for mankind's survival, yet man never contributes anything for the sake of the light or for righteousness. Even if man makes an effort for a time, it**

cannot withstand a single blow, for the effort of man is always for his own sake and not for others. Man is always selfish, while God is forever selfless. God is the source of all that is just, good, and beautiful, while man is he who succeeds to and makes manifest all ugliness and evil. God will never alter His essence of righteousness and beauty, yet man is perfectly capable, at any time and in any situation, of betraying righteousness and straying far from God” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. It Is Very Important to Understand God’s Disposition). God’s words showed me that God is selfless. Everything He does is done to save us; it all benefits us. God’s house promotes and trains people so that truth-seekers who have good caliber can get more practice and ultimately undertake God’s commissions. This benefits brothers and sisters, and the work of God’s house. As for me, I’d freely received the watering and sustenance of God’s words, and training from God’s house, but I didn’t think about doing my duty to repay God’s love. All I thought about was how to keep people under my control. For my own prestige and status, I didn’t hesitate to stand in the way of God’s house training people, which held up its work. I’d been so selfish and malicious, unfit to live before God. I knew I couldn’t go on that way. I had to provide God’s house with talented people so that more brothers and sisters could do the duty they were meant to do in the right place. Once I’d gotten my mind right, I quickly found someone to take on Sister Li’s work and I offered up my thanks to God. Although the new person didn’t know the principles and I had to work harder, I felt peaceful and at ease. I was willing to make sacrifices to do whatever I could do, and pray with my brothers and sisters to do our church work well.

Two weeks later, my leader said, “We want to transfer Sister Zhao, who edits documents, to another church to perform her duty.” Hearing this, I thought, “I must consider the overall work of God’s house. I can’t be

selfish anymore. Then again, we've only just started to train another sister to do this work and she doesn't know the principles. Our work is bound to suffer. Better if Sister Zhao stays where she is." I realized that I was thinking of my own interests again. I thought about how I'd walked the path of the antichrists, disrupting church work over and over and offending God's disposition. I felt so afraid. I thought of God's words: **"Do not always do things for your own sake and do not constantly consider your own interests; give no thought to your own status, prestige, or reputation. Also do not consider the interests of man. You must first give thought to the interests of God's house, and make them your first priority. You should be considerate of God's will and begin by contemplating whether or not you have been impure in the fulfillment of your duty, whether you have done your utmost to be loyal, done your best to fulfill your responsibilities, and given your all, as well as whether or not you have wholeheartedly given thought to your duty and the work of God's house. You must give consideration to these things. Think about them frequently, and it will be easier for you to perform your duty well. If you are of poor caliber, your experience is shallow, or you are not proficient in your professional work, then there may be some mistakes or deficiencies in your work, and the results may not be very good—but you will have put forth your best effort. When you are not thinking of your own selfish desires or considering your own interests in the things you do, and are instead giving constant consideration to the work of God's house, bearing its interests in mind, and performing your duty well, then you will be accumulating good deeds before God. People who perform these good deeds are the ones who possess truth reality; as such, they have borne testimony"** (The Word,

Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Give Your True Heart to God, and You Can Obtain

the Truth). God's words gave me the path to practice. I had to be mindful of God's will and church work. I couldn't be selfish and try to keep talent to myself. So I said a prayer to God: "Dear God, I've been so selfish and mean, always stopping God's house from promoting people and impacting church work. I don't want to resist You anymore. Please guide me to forsake my flesh and practice the truth." After praying, I went and spoke to Sister Zhao about her transfer. Although she was transferred, I didn't feel as upset as I had before. Instead, I felt it was God's kindness and blessing that I'd been able to supply such talent to God's house. I'd also been able to do my own duty and my heart was filled with peace and joy. Thanks be to Almighty God!

40. A Cure for Jealousy

By Xunqiu, China

Almighty God says, “Man’s flesh is of Satan, it is full of rebellious dispositions, it is deplorably filthy, and it is something unclean. People covet the enjoyment of the flesh too much and there are too many manifestations of the flesh; this is why God despises man’s flesh to a certain extent. When people cast off the filthy, corrupt things of Satan, they gain God’s salvation. But if they still do not divest themselves of filth and corruption, then they are still living under the domain of Satan. People’s conniving, deceitfulness, and crookedness are all things of Satan. God’s salvation of you is to extricate you from these things of Satan. God’s work cannot be wrong; it is all done in order to save people from darkness. When you have believed to a certain point and can divest yourself of the corruption of the flesh, and are no longer shackled by this corruption, will you not have been saved? When you live under Satan’s domain you are incapable of manifesting God, you are something filthy, and cannot receive God’s inheritance. Once you have been cleansed and made perfect, you will be holy, you will be a normal person, and you will be blessed by God and delightful to God”

(The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Practice (2)). I came to understand through God’s words that we have jealous struggles and interpersonal disputes because we’ve been corrupted by Satan, and we all live by our deceitful and evil satanic dispositions and are very selfish. There was a time when I lived in a state of jealousy, constantly scheming against people and striving for name and gain. It was a painful way to live, but I just couldn’t free myself. I owe it all to God’s judgment and chastisement that I could change a little and escape that pain.

It was June of 2017 when I was given the duty of a group leader in the church, responsible for the church life for a few gathering places. I was really happy to have that duty and felt God was elevating me, that I had to do it well to repay God's love. I was very active in fellowship in the gatherings after that, and when I saw brothers and sisters facing difficulties, or in a poor state, I'd find words of God to fellowship and address the problems. The others regarded me positively after a while and said that I could solve practical issues through fellowship in gatherings, that I took responsibility in my duty and was loving toward brothers and sisters. I felt really pleased with myself when I heard this.

Not long after, I heard there would be an election for a church leader and thought, "Everyone thinks highly of me, so I might have a good shot at it. If I were elected, the brothers and sisters would definitely look up to me even more." Later, Sister Yang and I were both nominated after a vote. I felt a little threatened when I saw that she'd received slightly more votes than me. I thought, "I'm responsible in my duty and I can do practical work. How could she have more votes than me?" But then I thought, "These are just nominations, not the final vote. I still have a chance. I need to equip myself with the truth now and help others resolve their difficulties in life entry more so they can all see she doesn't have anything on me, then I'll be sure to be elected!" I thought of an issue Sister Wang had brought up in the last gathering that hadn't been resolved, so I hurried to prepare some relevant words of God to fellowship with her next time. When the gathering day came around, I went to our meeting place, but as soon as I walked in I saw Sister Yang fellowshipping with Sister Wang. I felt really displeased. I thought, "I came today to fellowship with her to resolve her issue and you pounced on it first! If you've already taken care of it, how will I show what I can do?" Sure enough, a smile appeared on Sister Wang's face after Sister

Yang's fellowship and the other brothers and sisters all nodded approvingly. I really wasn't happy to see this. I was jealous of Sister Yang, thinking that she'd robbed me of my glory. I thought, "Before you joined this gathering, the others all wanted to hear my fellowship. But now everyone looks up to you and couldn't care less about me." Everyone was happily engaged in fellowship right then, but I couldn't take any of it in and couldn't wait to leave.

When I got home I sat down on my bed, dejected, feeling more out of sorts the more I brooded over it. I thought, "If this goes on, my chances at being a leader will be really slim. No way, I have to be more proactive in fellowship. I absolutely cannot lose out to her anymore." I later noticed Sister Xiang was having anxiety over the Chinese Communist Party's harsh persecution and was feeling constrained in her duty, so I quickly found some words of God to fellowship with her before the gathering. I got to the gathering place early the next day, but to my surprise, Sister Yang had gotten there even earlier and was already fellowshiping with Sister Xiang. My heart sank and I thought, "How could you have done this again? I need to see what kind of light you have in your fellowship. I simply don't believe it can cover everything." Unconvinced, I sat next to them to hear what she had to say. As I listened, I discovered that Sister Yang fellowshiped on some paths of practice in light of God's words, but she hadn't mentioned the root of Sister Xiang's weakness and negativity. I thought, "I need to make the most of this chance to share my own understanding and cut Sister Yang down to size." At this, I rushed to share my fellowship, saying, "Sister, just having a path of practice isn't enough to resolve a negative state. We also need to have understanding of the truth that concerns how God uses the great red dragon as a foil to perfect His chosen people. Only with understanding of God's work, almightiness and wisdom can we come

out from a negative state. Let's read some of God's words together." As Sister Xiang nodded her head, I shot a sidelong glance at Sister Yang and saw her sitting off to the side awkwardly. I felt as if I'd just won a battle, and thought, "Everyone can see whose fellowship is actually effective when they compare. I can hold my head up again, and it proves I'm not that bad." I became more active in my duty after that. The moment I heard of someone in a bad state or facing difficulties, I lost no time finding God's words, making notes, and then fellowshiping with them. When I saw someone nod their head I was thrilled, while if there wasn't any reaction I became unbearably anxious, then the more distressed I was, the less I could understand others' states or resolve problems. I was also feeling more and more tired, and thought, "If things go on like this brothers and sisters will definitely say I lack the reality of the truth and they won't elect me as a leader." Especially when I saw Sister Yang share practical fellowship on the truth that brothers and sisters agreed with, I became even more agitated. My jealousy and my inability to accept it came to the fore. I started to resent her and didn't even want to talk to her. I was living in that state of fighting for name and gain. It was really painful for me. I wasn't getting any enlightenment from God's words, and in prayer I was just going through the motions. I felt I was growing farther and farther apart from God.

I later prayed to God and asked for His enlightenment so I could understand my corrupt disposition and come out from that awful state. It was only through God's words that I gained some understanding of my corrupt state. This is what they say: **"Some people are always afraid that others will steal their limelight and surpass them, obtaining recognition while they themselves are neglected. This leads them to attack and exclude others. Is this not a case of being jealous of people more capable than themselves? Is such behavior not selfish and**

contemptible? What kind of disposition is this? It is malicious! Thinking only of oneself, satisfying only one's own desires, showing no consideration for the duties of others, and thinking only about one's own interests and not the interests of God's house—people like this have a bad disposition, and God has no love for them. If you are truly capable of being considerate of God's will, then you will be able to treat other people fairly. If you give someone your recommendation, and that person is cultivated into someone of talent, thereby bringing one more talented person into God's house, will you not then have done your work well? Will you not then have been loyal in performing your duty? This is a good deed before God, and it is the sort of conscience and reason people should possess” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Give Your True Heart to God, and You Can Obtain the Truth). I felt ashamed after reading God's words and I thought of all the jealous things, all the struggling for name and gain I'd done. I'd been burning with desire for it since I heard the church was to elect a leader, and then when I saw Sister Yang got more votes than me in the nominations, I started seeing her as my opponent, quietly fighting against her and vying with her. Seeing her resolve brothers' and sisters' problems through fellowship on the truth made me jealous. I thought she'd stolen my glory, that she threatened my chance at leadership. I secretly pitted myself against her, finding fault and nitpicking at her fellowship. I covertly belittled her while exalting myself, and I dampened her positivity in her duty. When I saw I couldn't win I became resentful of her and didn't even want to acknowledge her. I strove for name and gain and I was jealous in my duty. I lashed out at her and excluded her. I had revealed nothing but a satanic disposition. I was so selfish, despicable, and malicious! I was basing my life on satanic dispositions, not only hurting others, but living in resentment and pain. It

reminded me of Zhou Yu in Romance of the Three Kingdoms. He was so petty, always jealous of Zhuge Liang, and right before his death he said, “Since Yu was born, what need is there for Liang?” He ended up dying in anger. Aren’t those the terrible consequences of jealousy? I realized I was the same, that I was jealous in my efforts to gain status, not only hindering my own life entry, but also doing harm to others. I was totally lacking humanity. It was disgusting and hateful to God. In fact, God arranged for me to be around someone of higher caliber, hoping that I could learn from her strengths to improve on my weak points. But I just fought and made comparisons. I gained nothing in the end and was terribly pained. I was so foolish. Also, the truth rules in God’s house, and there are principles for the selection of leaders. At the very least, they are people of good humanity who can accept and practice the truth, but I was always jealous, vying for name and gain, and not living out any humanity. That made me unworthy of leadership. I knew I had to stop fighting, to focus on practicing the truth and live according to God’s words. That was the only proper path. I felt really relieved after recognizing all of that.

I said this prayer on the day of the election: “Oh God! No matter what the results are, I’m willing to obey You, and I will cast a fair vote.” But I still wavered when it really came time to vote. I thought, “If I vote for Sister Yang and she ends up being chosen, what will the others think of me? They’ll definitely say I’m not her equal.” These words of God came to mind just then: **“You must learn to let go and set aside these things, to recommend others, and to allow them to stand out. Do not struggle or rush to take advantage the moment you encounter an opportunity to stand out or obtain glory. You must learn to back off, but must not delay the performing of your duty. Be a person who works in quiet obscurity, and who does not show off to others while you loyally**

perform your duty. The more you let go of your prestige and status, and the more you let go of your own interests, the more peaceful you will become, and the more space will open up within your heart and the more your state will improve” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Give Your True Heart to God, and You Can Obtain the Truth). At that I thought, “I have to practice God’s words. I can’t keep living for my prestige and status.” I thought about how Sister Yang was of good caliber and her fellowship was practical, so having her as a leader would benefit the church as well as brothers’ and sisters’ life entry. I had to practice the truth and uphold the church’s interests. And so, I voted for her. She was voted in as a leader and I was very calm and at peace with it. I felt that I’d finally managed to practice the truth. Thanks be to God!

Later on, in April 2018, I was chosen for the duty of a church leader, working alongside a few other brothers and sisters responsible for the church’s work. At first, we discussed all of the church’s work and collaborated really smoothly. But after a while, I noticed that Sister Li, who was in charge of our writing work, was of good caliber and learned things quickly. Her fellowship was enlightening and edifying for others. I really admired her, but I did feel some jealousy. I started looking to get involved in work within her purview, wanting to learn more skills and principles so I didn’t fall behind her. One day I got a letter from our leader saying they needed someone to take on a task at a church in another area and asking if Sister Li would be well-suited. She asked if I could collect some assessments of her. My jealousy flared up right away, and I thought, “They want to cultivate Sister Li. Her caliber is good and she picks things up quickly, but she hasn’t been a believer for long and her life entry is shallow. In what way do I not match up to her? Why not have me go? If Sister Li does go take on that role, what will the others think of me? They’d

definitely say she's better than me." These thoughts made me more and more uncomfortable, and I hardly even acknowledged her when I saw her after that. Seeing me behave like that was constraining for her and she stopped discussing things with me as she had before. I got brothers' and sisters' assessments of Sister Li a few days later, and I felt really jealous when I saw they were all positive, even better than their assessments of me. I was a leader, but I didn't even match up to a co-worker. How embarrassing for me! I became more and more uncomfortable as I thought about it. I made a point to say to another sister, "What's up with your assessment? You don't have any discernment. Sister Li has progressed, but her life entry is shallow. You made her sound so good, but if she goes to another church and delays their work because she can't do practical work, that would be doing evil on your part!" Hearing this from me scared the sister a bit. She said she'd written it based on the actual circumstances, but hadn't considered the full picture, and that she'd take another look at it. Even though I'd done what I set out to do, I just couldn't feel happy. Especially when I saw Sister Li, I had pangs of conscience and I felt really guilty. I'd done something bad, something shameful, and I didn't dare look her in the eye. Seeing I seemed a bit off, she came over and said out of concern, "Is there something wrong?" I felt even guiltier when I heard her say that, so I just stuttered out "Y-yeah," then rushed into another room and kneeled down in prayer to God. I said, "Oh God, I'm so unreasonable. I got jealous of Sister Li when I saw everyone's evaluations and even undermined her behind her back. God, I know You detest this sort of thing, but I'm bound by my corrupt disposition. I can't stop myself. God, please enlighten me so I can truly know myself and stop living by my corrupt disposition." Feeling a little calmer after my prayer, I turned on my computer and read a couple passages of God's words.

God says: “If some people see someone better than they are, they suppress them, start a rumor about them, or employ some unscrupulous means so that other people don’t look highly upon them, and that no one is any better than anyone else, then this is the corrupt disposition of arrogance and self-rightness, as well as crookedness, deceitfulness and insidiousness, and these people stop at nothing to achieve their aims. They live like this and yet still think they’re great and that they’re good people. However, do they have God-fearing hearts? First of all, to speak from the perspective of the natures of these matters, are not people who act this way simply doing as they please? Do they consider the interests of God’s family? They think only of their own feelings and they want only to achieve their own aims, regardless of the loss suffered by the work of God’s family. Not only are people like this arrogant and self-right, they are also selfish and contemptible; they are utterly inconsiderate of God’s intention, and people like this, without a shadow of a doubt, do not possess God-fearing hearts. This is why they do whatever they want and act wantonly, without any sense of blame, without any trepidation, without any apprehension or worry, and without considering the consequences. This is what they often do, and how they have always behaved. What are the consequences such people face? They will be in trouble, right? To put it lightly, such people are far too jealous and have too strong a desire for personal fame and status; they are too deceitful and treacherous. To put it more harshly, the essential problem is that such people’s hearts are not even the slightest bit God-fearing. They do not fear God, they believe themselves to be of utmost importance, and they regard every aspect of themselves as being higher than God and higher than the truth. In their hearts, God is the least worthy of mention and the most insignificant, and God

does not have any status in their hearts at all. Have those who have no place for God in their hearts, and who do not revere God, attained entry into the truth? (No.) So, when they typically go around merrily keeping themselves busy and exerting quite a lot of energy, what are they doing? Such people even claim to have abandoned everything to expend for God and suffered a great deal, but actually, the motive, principle, and objective of all their actions are to benefit themselves; they are only trying to protect all of their own interests. Would you or would you not say that this sort of person is terrible? What sort of person is one who does not revere God? Are they not arrogant? Are they not Satan? What kinds of things do not revere God? Leaving aside the animals, all those that do not revere God include demons, Satan, the archangel, and those who contend with God” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The Five States Necessary to Be on the Right Track in One’s Faith). **“Man’s corrupt disposition stems from his being poisoned and trampled upon by Satan, from the egregious harm that Satan has inflicted upon his thinking, morality, insight, and sense. It is precisely because the fundamental things of man have been corrupted by Satan, and are utterly unlike how God originally created them, that man opposes God and does not understand the truth”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. To Have an Unchanged Disposition Is to Be in Enmity to God).

I was so upset and dismayed by God’s words. Hadn’t He revealed my state precisely? I became jealous and prejudiced when the leader wanted to cultivate Sister Li and I even undermined and judged her in despicable ways. I thought of everything to keep her from getting that duty without considering the church’s interests at all. I did whatever I felt like to get what I wanted. I was arrogant, arbitrary, and had no reverence for God. God hopes that more people can be considerate of His will and perform their

duties. I knew well that Sister Li had good caliber and focused on pursuing the truth, so with more training opportunities, her life entry and skills would progress, and that would benefit the church's work. But I held her back trying to protect my own prestige and status, even using underhanded means to keep her from getting assigned to that duty. Before I knew it, I'd become Satan's minion and was disrupting the church's work. I really kicked myself. I had known that jealousy is at odds with God's will, but I'd never imagined that it would drive me to do something so inhumane, that I would disrupt the church's work, do evil, and resist God. I remembered God's words: **"Man's corrupt disposition stems from his being poisoned and trampled upon by Satan."** I thought about how I was always jealous and couldn't stand to see anyone better than me because my thinking and perspectives had been twisted by Satan's poisons, just like "Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost," "In all the universe, only I reign supreme," and "There can only be one alpha male." Living by these poisons, I wanted to fight my way to the front in any group, thinking I should be above others, and I couldn't treat anyone fairly if I thought they were more capable than me. I was jealous and discriminatory, seeing them as a thorn in my side. I was jealous, excluding, and hostile toward people around me who pursued the truth, even undermining them behind their backs. I was totally lacking humanity! I always wanted to build myself up and tear others down, to fight, to win, and I wouldn't give in to anyone. I just wanted to show off. Wasn't I a living Satan? Only then did I see that those satanic poisons and rules for survival had become my very nature. I based my life around them, becoming more and more selfish, arrogant, and malicious. If I kept refusing to repent to God, I knew I'd be loathed and eliminated by Him. I really felt afraid when I realized all of this. I rushed to

pray to God, telling Him I wanted to repent, that I would try to practice the truth from then on and stop living by those satanic poisons.

A few days later I received a letter from the leader saying that overall, Sister Li looked like a good fit for the work at the other church. I did feel something stir within me when I read it, but I immediately realized that it was my jealousy manipulating me again. I immediately prayed to God and became willing to forsake myself. I read two more passages of God's words after my prayer. God says: **"When you reveal yourself to be selfish and ignoble, and have become conscious of this, you should seek the truth: What should I do to be in line with God's will? How should I act so that it benefits everyone? That is, you must begin by setting your own interests aside, gradually giving them up according to your stature, a little at a time. After you have experienced this a few times, you will have set them aside completely, and as you do so, you will feel more and more steadfast. The more you set your interests aside, the more you will feel that as a human being, you should have conscience and reason. You will feel that without selfish motives, you are being a straightforward, upright person, and you are doing things entirely in order to satisfy God. You will feel that such behavior makes you worthy of being called 'human,' and that in living this way on earth, you are being open and honest, you are being a genuine person, you have a clear conscience, and are worthy of all the things bestowed upon you by God. The more you live like this, the more steadfast and the brighter you will feel. As such, will you not have set foot upon the right track?"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Give Your True Heart to God, and You Can Obtain the Truth). **"If you are truly capable of being considerate of God's will, then you will be able to treat other people fairly. If you give someone your recommendation, and that person is cultivated into someone of talent,**

thereby bringing one more talented person into God's house, will you not then have done your work well? Will you not then have been loyal in performing your duty? This is a good deed before God, and it is the sort of conscience and reason people should possess" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Give Your True Heart to God, and You Can Obtain the Truth). God's words clearly outlined a path of practice. I should let go of my own interests and think of the interests of God's house. I should recommend anyone who's stronger than me in a certain area so that every talented person can put their strengths into play in God's house and play their part in spreading the kingdom gospel. Only that kind of person has humanity, and is someone who is considerate of God's will and can uphold the interests of God's house. They gain God's approval and that's a good deed. I went to see Sister Li that same evening and asked her if she wanted to leave to go take on that duty. She said she was willing to do it, but was worried she wouldn't do well since she was new to the faith and her stature was small. After hearing her concern, I fellowshipped with her on God's will, encouraging her to lean on and look to God and focus on seeking the principles of the truth in her duty. She left for her new duty a few days later. I was really happy, and felt that being able to practice the truth and not live for my prestige and status was the only way to live with integrity and dignity. I was totally at peace within my heart.

When I look back to when I was living by my corrupt disposition, always jealous and fighting for name and status, corrupted and toyed with by Satan, I see it was such a painful way to live. God set up all sorts of people, things, events, and environments to expose me, to save me. He also used His words to expose and judge me, and to water and sustain me until I finally had some knowledge of my satanic nature, and saw the nature and consequences of being jealous and fighting for name and gain. Only then

could I practice a bit of truth and gain a little conscience and reason. Thanks
be to God!

41. Replacing Jealousy With Magnanimity

By Fu Dan, China

A few years back, Sister Xiaojie was transferred to our church to help me with leadership duties. Over time I found that despite being young, she was of good caliber and really capable. She practiced the truth when problems arose and focused on seeking the principles of the truth. I didn't match up to her in caliber or work ability. I really admired her and felt she was talented. At a co-workers' meeting once, a leader asked me if there were people in the church who pursued the truth and had high caliber. I told her about Sister Xiaojie's strengths without hesitation. Before long, the leader invited her to the co-workers' meeting and asked her to go to the next several meetings, too. I gradually started to feel a little uncomfortable, thinking, "I was always the one to attend the meetings and the leader discussed church work with me. Now she's asking Xiaojie to go. It looks like she wants to focus her efforts on training her. If I'd known, I wouldn't have mentioned her strong points." I felt like I'd been forgotten and left behind all because of her. I was feeling more and more upset, and a thought was quietly forming that it would be great if the leader transferred her out. As long as we weren't together, I wouldn't look worse than her and then maybe the leader would discuss things with me. But I knew that Xiaojie wouldn't be transferred again so quickly. I felt like there was a heavy weight pressing down on my heart. Not only that, but I was unwilling to concede. I secretly threw myself in God's words, reading, memorizing, and pondering them more so I could surpass her in fellowship on the truth to prove myself. But my motives were wrong. I was just vying with her for status so I didn't have the Holy Spirit's work in my duty. I couldn't understand or resolve any problems.

Once, a couple of sisters were chosen as church deacons. They were worried they didn't understand enough truth to resolve others' practical problems with entry into life. They didn't want to take on the position. Hearing this, I thought, "What words of God can I fellowship on to resolve their state so that everyone can see Sister Xiaojie is no better than me?" As soon as those sisters finished, I rushed to read a couple of passages of God's words and then share fellowship. But I just wanted to show off and be looked up to, not to quiet myself before God and seek the truth to find the root of the problem. My fellowship fell flat. Seeing them sitting there without responding was really awkward. I didn't know what to say. Then Sister Xiaojie started to fellowship on the meaning of doing our duty and talked about her own experience and understanding, and about God's will. The sisters were moved to tears and resolved to accept that duty. Seeing them giving Xiaojie admiring looks left a bad taste in my mouth. Everyone really approved of me before she came, but she'd gained the upper hand in everything so soon after joining the church. The leader valued her and brothers and sisters looked up to her, and I didn't match up even though I'd been a leader for longer. I worried what the others thought of me. Would they say I lacked the reality of the truth, that I just made her look good by comparison? My thoughts were consumed with this over that period of time. I felt like Sister Xiaojie was stealing my thunder and I became jealous of her. Sometimes I'd wish that I could get her out of our church in some way. I racked my brains about it, but couldn't come up with anything. I also felt that I was growing more distant from God and my spirit was falling into darkness. My fellowships on God's words had no light to them and I couldn't help others with their problems. I still did my duty every day, but I was tormented and in pain. I brought my state before God in prayer, asking Him to guide me to understand His will and know my own corruption.

I later read these words from God: **“As church leaders, you should learn how to discover and cultivate talent, and not be jealous of talented people. In this way, your duty will be performed satisfactorily, and you will have fulfilled your responsibility; you will also have done your utmost to be loyal. Some people are always afraid that others will steal their limelight and surpass them, obtaining recognition while they themselves are neglected. This leads them to attack and exclude others. Is this not a case of being jealous of people more capable than themselves? Is such behavior not selfish and contemptible? What kind of disposition is this? It is malicious! Thinking only of oneself, satisfying only one’s own desires, showing no consideration for the duties of others, and thinking only about one’s own interests and not the interests of God’s house—people like this have a bad disposition, and God has no love for them”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Give Your True Heart to God, and You Can Obtain the Truth). God’s words really cut to the quick. They exposed my precise state. Seeing my sister’s high caliber and practical fellowship, that the leader valued her and others looked up to her, I was jealous and ostracized her. I couldn’t wait for her to leave the church. I didn’t consider how that would impact the church’s work or the interests of God’s house. I showed nothing but viciousness, and was particularly selfish and despicable. I totally lacked normal humanity! How could doing my duty that way not disgust God? I lost the Holy Spirit’s guidance in my duty and I fell into darkness. That was God’s righteous disposition. So I prayed to God asking Him to guide me to let go of status, live out normal humanity, and work well with my sister.

Then I read these words from God: **“If you are truly capable of being considerate of God’s will, then you will be able to treat other people fairly. If you give someone your recommendation, and that person is**

cultivated into someone of talent, thereby bringing one more talented person into God's house, will you not then have done your work well? Will you not then have been loyal in performing your duty? This is a good deed before God, and it is the sort of conscience and reason people should possess" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Give Your True Heart to God, and You Can Obtain the Truth). I felt even more regretful and guilty. God wants more people who pursue the truth to rise up and cooperate with God. I was a church leader but I didn't have what God wanted at heart. When I saw that kind of person working in the church, not only was I not happy about it, but I was just jealous and worried about my status. I didn't have the most basic conscience and reason of a person. I saw I was totally unfit to be a leader and I hated how selfish I was. Sister Xiaojie having good caliber and resolving problems through fellowship was good for the church's work and brothers' and sisters' lives. I should have been supporting her and learning from her strengths. Working well with her in our duty was the only way to be considerate of God's will. Once I understood God's will, I did still feel a little jealous when I noticed others approving of Sister Xiaojie, but I would pray to God and forsake myself. I focused on living before God to do my duty well and stopped thinking so much about who was looked up to and I felt a lot less jealous. I became able to seek and discuss things with her in the face of a problem and draw on her strengths to offset my weaknesses, seeking the principles of the truth together. I felt much freer and more at ease. After undergoing some change, I thought my jealous nature had improved but I was surprised when I ran into another situation that showed how deeply rooted my satanic nature was. I needed to go through more of God's judgment and chastisement to be cleansed.

One time, Xiaojie and I went to a co-workers' meeting where the leader briefly greeted me and then started discussing the church's work with Xiaojie. I was just sitting to the side feeling like a fifth wheel and my mood turned sour really quickly. I shot Xiaojie a disgruntled look and couldn't help but feel suspicious, thinking, "So the leader does value you more than me. You're the golden child in the church and in the leader's eyes and I just make you look good by comparison." I later heard the leader had arranged for Xiaojie to attend sermons in another area and get some training. I really wasn't happy to hear this. "Why did she want Xiaojie to go, and not me?" I thought. "Am I really that bad? Am I not even worth a little training?" I felt embarrassed and like I'd been doused with cold water. I felt completely unable to accept that, thinking that I put just as much into my duty as she did, but I was being left behind while she went to listen to sermons. I felt totally overlooked and that no matter what I did, I'd never match up to her. I felt worse the more I compared myself that way and I started to live in a state of jealousy and resentment again. I was dying for the leader to have us work separately so I could get my chance to stand out.

Soon after that, Xiaojie's husband became seriously ill. This was really hard for her. I comforted her and encouraged her to pray and seek God's will through this trial, but I couldn't help but think, "She was really at her peak. Now she's being refined and she's in a bad state, so it'll be my chance to show myself. If she does improve her state then I'll never get that chance. I hope this refinement lasts a while for her. Then everyone will see she fellowships well when things are normal, but she can't live out the reality of God's words. Then they won't admire her so much. The leader might see she lacks the reality of the truth and won't train her anymore and then naturally the others will think highly of me." I didn't really think much about my state of mind but just let those thoughts pass. One day, a couple of

sisters asked about Xiaojie out of concern and I said she was in a terrible state, and even though she usually had great fellowship, she'd become negative through the trial and lacked true stature. I felt uneasy once I'd said that. I was exaggerating things to judge and demean her. But when I saw those sisters took me at my word, I felt secretly pleased. I thought they wouldn't admire Xiaojie so much anymore. But when I saw her later, even though she was really suffering and cried whenever she prayed, she didn't let it interfere with her duty at all. I couldn't help but feel a little guilty. Faced with that trial, it would be hard not to suffer and feel some weakness. I would've prayed for her if I really had humanity, and done everything I could to help and support her. But what had I done? I felt terrible about it. I came before God in prayer, saying, "Oh God! I'm much too jealous. I judged and demeaned Sister Xiaojie so I could outdo her. I even reveled in her pain, and couldn't wait for her to become negative and stumble. I'm totally lacking humanity. God, please guide me and enlighten me to know my corruption and be freed from my satanic disposition."

I read this in God's words after my prayer: **"If some people see someone better than they are, they suppress them, start a rumor about them, or employ some unscrupulous means so that other people don't look highly upon them, and that no one is any better than anyone else, then this is the corrupt disposition of arrogance and self-rightness, as well as crookedness, deceitfulness and insidiousness, and these people stop at nothing to achieve their aims. They live like this and yet still think they're great and that they're good people. However, do they have God-fearing hearts? First of all, to speak from the perspective of the natures of these matters, are not people who act this way simply doing as they please? Do they consider the interests of God's family? They think only of their own feelings and they want only to achieve**

their own aims, regardless of the loss suffered by the work of God's family. Not only are people like this arrogant and self-right, they are also selfish and contemptible; they are utterly inconsiderate of God's intention, and people like this, without a shadow of a doubt, do not possess God-fearing hearts. This is why they do whatever they want and act wantonly, without any sense of blame, without any trepidation, without any apprehension or worry, and without considering the consequences. This is what they often do, and how they have always behaved. What are the consequences such people face? They will be in trouble, right? To put it lightly, such people are far too jealous and have too strong a desire for personal fame and status; they are too deceitful and treacherous. To put it more harshly, the essential problem is that such people's hearts are not even the slightest bit God-fearing. They do not fear God, they believe themselves to be of utmost importance, and they regard every aspect of themselves as being higher than God and higher than the truth. In their hearts, God is the least worthy of mention and the most insignificant, and God does not have any status in their hearts at all. ... Would you or would you not say that this sort of person is terrible? What sort of person is one who does not revere God? Are they not arrogant? Are they not Satan? What kinds of things do not revere God? Leaving aside the animals, all those that do not revere God include demons, Satan, the archangel, and those who contend with God" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The Five States Necessary to Be on the Right Track in One's Faith). Reading this really struck to the heart. That's exactly the sort of person I was. I knew Sister Xiaojie had good caliber, pursued the truth, and was worth being trained, but when I saw the leader valued her and wanted to send her away for gatherings, I was thrown off balance. I felt I was being wronged and I couldn't accept it. I

became jealous and resentful of her and badly wanted the leader to transfer her out. When she was weak and in pain through her trial, I acted like I helped her, but I reveled in her suffering. I wanted her to become negative so I could have the limelight. I even judged and demeaned her in front of others to elevate myself just so I could stand out. I'd believed in God for years but had no reverence for Him. I was jealous and did unconscionable things just to protect my own status. I was so despicable and malicious. I was narrow-minded, vain, vicious, and petty! How was I any different from Satan? Only Satan can't stand to see things go well and wants people to be negative, far from God, and to betray God. I was clearly acting as Satan's lackey, disrupting the church's work. I was undermining God's house and doing evil, standing with Satan against God! Even so, I thought a lot of myself. I clearly lacked the reality of the truth and my caliber didn't match up to Sister Xiaojie's. I was always vying for status, wanting to outdo her. I was so arrogant and lacking in any self-awareness! At that point, I really hated myself and urgently wanted to be freed of my satanic disposition.

I read this in God's words after that: **"The source of man's opposition and rebelliousness against God is his corruption by Satan. Because of Satan's corruption, man's conscience has grown numb; he is immoral, his thoughts are degenerate, and he has a backward mental outlook. Before he was corrupted by Satan, man naturally followed God and obeyed His words after hearing them. He was naturally of sound sense and conscience, and of normal humanity. After being corrupted by Satan, man's original sense, conscience, and humanity grew dull and were impaired by Satan. Thus, he has lost his obedience and love toward God. Man's sense has become aberrant, his disposition has become the same as that of an animal, and his rebelliousness toward God is ever more frequent and grievous. Yet man still neither knows**

nor recognizes this, and merely opposes and rebels blindly. Man's disposition is revealed in expressions of his sense, insight, and conscience; because his sense and insight are unsound, and his conscience has grown supremely dull, thus his disposition is rebellious against God. If man's sense and insight cannot change, then changes in his disposition are out of the question, as is conforming to God's will. If man's sense is unsound, then he cannot serve God and is unfit for use by God" (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. To Have an Unchanged Disposition Is to Be in Enmity to God). This helped me understand that I was always rebelling against and resisting God, living in corruption because I'd been corrupted by Satan. I'd been steeped in satanic principles and logic such as "Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost," "In all the universe, only I reign supreme," "There can only be one alpha male," "A man leaves his name behind wherever he stays, just as a goose utters its cry wherever it flies," and so on. I'd accepted these adages from Satan, and my perspectives, rules for survival, and reason had been twisted, making me more arrogant and evil and devoid of humanity. Controlled by these poisons from Satan, I just wanted to seek name and status and be looked up to. I wanted to stand out in any crowd and didn't want anyone to surpass me, and whenever someone did, I couldn't help but become competitive. If I couldn't surpass others, I'd get jealous and resentful or even do underhanded things to reach my goal. I showed nothing but the satanic dispositions of arrogance, deceit, and viciousness. I claimed to be doing my duty, but in fact I was working for myself, doing evil and resisting God. I thought of the antichrists who'd been expelled. They were jealous and bitter toward anyone who pursued the truth or cared for God's will and treated anyone who threatened their own status like a thorn in their side. They were oppressive and spiteful and even wanted others expelled from the church so

they could reign supreme. They all ended up kicked out of the church from doing so much evil. I wasn't as spiteful or doing great evil like the antichrists, but I was jealous and controlled by my arrogant, vicious nature. I even excluded and judged Sister Xiaojie to maintain my own status. I was on the path of an antichrist who's against God. God's righteous disposition tolerates no offense. I knew if I didn't repent, I'd end up rejected and eliminated by God. That was terrifying for me. I knew that God was protecting me with His harsh judgment. Otherwise I wouldn't reflect on myself, then regrets would come too late when I did something truly evil. I was really moved as I pondered God's will. I prayed to God, ready to repent and change.

I read these words of God in my devotionals one day: **“For each of you fulfilling your duty, no matter how profoundly you understand the truth, if you wish to enter truth reality, then the simplest way to practice is to think of the interests of God’s house in everything you do, and to let go of your selfish desires, your individual intent, motives, prestige, and status. Put the interests of God’s house first—this is the least you should do. If a person performing his duty cannot do even this much, then how can he be said to be performing his duty? This is not performing one’s duty. You should first consider the interests of God’s house, consider God’s own interests, and consider His work, and put these considerations first and foremost; only after that can you think about the stability of your status or how others see you. ... In addition, if you can fulfill your responsibilities, perform your obligations and duties, set aside your selfish desires, set aside your own intents and motives, have consideration for God’s will, and put the interests of God and His house first, then after experiencing this for a while, you will feel that this is a good way to live. It is living straightforwardly and**

honestly, without being a base person or a good-for-nothing, and living justly and honorably rather than being narrow-minded or mean. You will feel that this is how a person should live and act. Gradually, the desire within your heart to gratify your own interests will lessen” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Give Your True Heart to God, and You Can Obtain the Truth). **“The functions are not the same. There is one body. Each does his duty, each in his place and doing his very best—for each spark there is one flash of light—and seeking maturity in life. Thus will I be satisfied”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 21). I understood from God’s words that God predetermines everyone’s caliber and what role they can fill. We can’t vie or struggle for those things. When someone else has better caliber, when God predetermines that I should be the grass, not the tree, I should just be that blade of grass and carry out that role happily. I didn’t want to vie with others over status anymore, but to let go of my selfish desires and not live by my satanic disposition, put the interests of God’s house first, and truly do my duty well in a grounded way. That’s the only way to live in the light. I opened up to the sisters about my corruption and apologized to Sister Xiaojie. When she learned about my malicious intentions and doings, she didn’t blame me at all but fellowshiped on the truth to help me. I was really moved. I also hated that I’d lacked humanity and hurt her. I later prayed to God to stop scheming for status and just do my duty well.

Xiaojie returned from her trip a little over a month later and shared what she’d learned in the gatherings. Her fellowship really was edifying and beneficial, but when I saw the others listening attentively, I got that uncomfortable feeling again. I realized I was struggling for status and being jealous again, so I quickly prayed to God to set myself aside. I remembered something I’d heard in a sermon that a reasonable person who serves God

won't get jealous, but will hope for others to be better than themselves so that more people can help share God's burden. Someone like that can take joy when God gains someone. I realized that she'd grown and learned things from her trip to listen to sermons and she could water and help others. This was good for everyone's understanding of the truth and would bring comfort to God. I had to learn from her and draw on her strengths in my duty. That was critical. When I prayed and forsook myself that way, I felt much more at ease. Whatever brothers and sisters thought and whatever my position in the church wasn't important to me anymore. I just calmed down and listened to her fellowship and took in the enlightenment. I worked with her to seek the principles of the truth in our work. After that, when I saw the leader discussing something with her, I was okay with it and didn't feel jealous. This was a big relief for me. I personally experienced that I felt more at ease and upstanding when I let go of my jealousy and over time I was able to live out a human likeness. I've changed a bit all because of the judgment and chastisement of God's words. I give thanks to God for my salvation!

42. Breathing Easy Without Jealousy

By Anjing, China

In January of 2017, I was given the duty of watering within the church. I was so grateful to God for the chance to train on this duty, and resolved to do it attentively and well. After some time, I achieved some results, whether in helping brothers and sisters put their states right, or fellowshiping with them in gatherings. My brothers, sisters and the church leaders all thought highly of me, and I began to feel very pleased with myself, that I was doing great.

In June, my church leaders arranged for Sister Wenjing to work with me on this duty, and asked me to help my sister out where she needed it, which I happily agreed to do. As we got to working together, I found that Sister Wenjing pursued the truth, and her caliber and her way with words were all pretty good. Seeing this, I became a little wary of her. I began to think: “With a bit more training, she’s going to surpass me. Our brothers and sisters will surely start looking up to her, the leaders will spend more time nurturing her talent, and then no one will look up to me anymore.” But what I was afraid of eventually happened. After a gathering one day, I went to see a church leader to give her experience testimonials, written by myself and Sister Wenjing. After reading them, our church leader smiled and said, “Sister Wenjing’s testimonial article isn’t bad. There are some practical experiences here, and she writes very well.” Hearing her praise Sister Wenjing like this, I felt very unhappy. I thought to myself: “Sister Wenjing has a good caliber, it’s true. But I’ve resolved more problems in work than she has. I’m still better than her in that respect. I’ll have to work harder—I can’t let her overtake me, otherwise I’ll lose my position here.”

A few days later, Sister Wenjing wrote another experience testimonial. Our church leader read it, and once again praised Sister Wenjing's caliber and the positivity with which she had written her article, and asked me to spend more time on mine. I bristled at her words, and began to blame the leader, thinking: "You're always going on about how great Wenjing's caliber is. Is she better than me at everything? Sister Wenjing only has to attend a handful of gathering places, leaving her plenty of time to write these articles. If I wasn't so busy with church work, I'd have lots of free time to write articles, too." I was sick of hearing her being praised, so I just said to my church leader, bluntly: "I can write, too." A week later, the other church leader praised Sister Wenjing's experience testimonials as being highly practical, and encouraged her to write more, while also asking me to write as proactively as her. I was really upset—she'd only been here for a short time and had already written two experience testimonials, and she was being praised by the church leaders. I'd been doing this duty for some time but had only written one—what would the church leaders think of me? Would they say that I wasn't able to organize my time, that I wasn't willing to suffer or pay a price to write my testimonials? I'd already been shown up by the quality of Sister Wenjing's superior caliber, and now that she was able to write these articles, the leaders were sure to think her better than me. If she kept on writing them, wasn't I going to look even worse? What I had to do, I decided, was to find a way to keep her busy, so that she wouldn't have time to write these articles and there wouldn't appear to be much difference between us in the eyes of the leaders. In order to maintain my status in the church, I began to dial up the pressure on her, and delegated several fellowship meeting groups to her. Seeing how busy she became every day after this, I thought about offering to take back some of her responsibilities. But I thought to myself: "If you weren't this busy, then

you'd have time to write those articles. It's best to keep you busy." One evening, I caught her writing one, and in a stern tone I pressed her for details about the work of all the groups she was in charge of, and found out that there were a few new believers whose problems had not been resolved. I reprimanded her, telling her that she wasn't being attentive in her duty. After I was done dressing her down, she just lowered her head, and said nothing.

A month later, a church leader saw how Sister Wenjing hadn't been having much success with the groups she was responsible for and how there were still some problems she had left unresolved, and she asked me what was going on. I thought to myself: "You thought so highly of her, but now you know she hasn't been achieving much in her duty, you won't be regarding her so highly anymore!" But, to my surprise, she made a point of asking me to help her out even more! I was very resistant to this. "You only have eyes for Sister Wenjing," I thought. "Her caliber is better than mine. If I keep on helping her out, she'll end up replacing me." I started making excuses, but the church leader saw through to my state. She exposed my selfishness and meanness, and said that I wasn't upholding the work of God's house. She also said that Sister Wenjing had a good caliber and was worth training, that I had to fellowship with her and help her more, and that I couldn't only be concerned about my own status and reputation. Later on, I forced myself to ask Sister Wenjing if she was having any difficulties performing her duty. I saw that she felt constrained by me and didn't want to open up to me. That should have given me cause to reflect on myself, but I disliked her and thought to myself: "I tried to help her, but she doesn't want to say anything." Little by little, my spirit became darker. When discussing the work of the church, I became oblivious to a number of obvious problems that were arising. The more I saw her, the more annoyed I

was by her presence. One day I saw her making a mistake, and I became angry and reprimanded her sternly, saying, “We’ve already discussed this problem, and you still haven’t resolved it. You always take care when you’re writing those articles—it’s a shame you can’t do the same when you’re doing your duty!” After this, Sister Wenjing felt very constrained by me and dared not write any more testimonials. I knew that I’d hurt her, but I couldn’t help it—I always found myself getting angry with her, without meaning to. I was suffering at heart, too, so I prayed to God to help me get out of this state.

The next day, during a gathering, Sister Wenjing said that she felt as though her deficiencies were too great, that she wasn’t up to doing this duty and wanted to go back to the duty she was doing before. Hearing this, I immediately thought: “Is this all because of the pain I’ve caused her? If that’s true, then I’ve really done something evil.” I became a little panicked and afraid. I asked her the reason behind all this, and fellowshiped on God’s will to help her. After fellowshiping with her, her state greatly improved, and—to my great relief—she said that she was willing to carry on with this duty. Just then, a church leader came by. When she found out that I’d been stifling Sister Wenjing and that Wenjing hadn’t wanted to keep working with me, she dealt with me harshly. She said, “Why can’t you fellowship with her calmly and help her when you see her doing things wrong? Instead, you get hot-blooded and treat her badly. The results of your duties have been noticeably bad of late—you need to engage in some earnest self-reflection.” What she said really got to me. I became tearful, and inside I felt wronged and started to protest: “If things haven’t been going well with work recently, it hasn’t only been because of me—why am I the only one being dealt with?” But then, I thought of God’s words: **“If you believe in God’s sovereignty, then you have to believe that everyday occurrences,**

be they good or bad, do not happen at random. It is not that someone is deliberately being hard on you or targeting you; this was all arranged by God. Why does God orchestrate all these things? It is not to reveal you for who you are or to expose you; exposing you is not the end goal. The goal is to perfect you and save you” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. To Gain the Truth, You Must Learn From the People, Matters, and Things Around You). It was true—it was by God’s permission that I was encountering all these people, events, and things now. It wasn’t that the church leader was making things difficult for me deliberately; it was my own corrupt disposition that I needed to reflect on and resolve. I had to stop making excuses and complaining—I had to keep an obedient heart and accept what was going on. When I thought of this, I felt a little less aggrieved by everything that had happened.

That evening, I couldn’t sleep. I lay in bed, tossing and turning, while everything that had happened that day kept playing itself over in my head, like a movie. I kept asking myself: “If God arranged for the church leader to deal with and prune me, what is it that I should learn from all this? How have I been treating Sister Wenjing?” I knew well that she was of good caliber, but I hadn’t tried to learn from her—instead, I had tried to compete with her. She had wanted to write articles bearing witness for God, but I had tried to destroy her enthusiasm for writing these articles. How could I have done something so wicked? What had been the thinking behind that, and where did it come from?

The next day during my devotionals, I read a passage of God’s words: **“Some people are always afraid that others will steal their limelight and surpass them, obtaining recognition while they themselves are neglected. This leads them to attack and exclude others. Is this not a**

case of being jealous of people more capable than themselves? Is such behavior not selfish and contemptible? What kind of disposition is this? It is malicious! Thinking only of oneself, satisfying only one's own desires, showing no consideration for the duties of others, and thinking only about one's own interests and not the interests of God's house—people like this have a bad disposition, and God has no love for them. If you are truly capable of being considerate of God's will, then you will be able to treat other people fairly. If you give someone your recommendation, and that person is cultivated into someone of talent, thereby bringing one more talented person into God's house, will you not then have done your work well? Will you not then have been loyal in performing your duty? This is a good deed before God, and it is the sort of conscience and reason people should possess” (The Word, Vol. 3. The

Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Give Your True Heart to God, and You Can Obtain the Truth).

“Cruel mankind! The connivance and intrigue, the snatching and grabbing one from another, the scramble for fame and fortune, the mutual slaughter—when will it ever end? Despite the hundreds of thousands of words God has spoken, no one has come to their senses. People act for the sake of their families, sons and daughters, for their careers, future prospects, position, vainglory, and money, for the sake of food, clothing, and the flesh. But is there anyone whose actions are truly for the sake of God? Even among those who act for the sake of God, there are but few who know God. How many people do not act out of their own interests? How many do not oppress or ostracize others in order to protect their own position?” (The Word, Vol. 1. The

Appearance and Work of God. The Wicked Will Surely Be Punished). What God's words spoke of was exactly my own state. As it turned out, I had been vying with my sister for recognition and reputation. I had been trapped by my desire

for fame and status, and I was unable to extricate myself from it. Since I had started working together with Sister Wenjing in this duty and saw her good caliber and her passion for writing experience testimonials, and her being praised by the church leaders, I'd been jealous and unwilling to accept it. I'd been pitting myself against her, privately competing with her in my own mind. I had put her in charge of multiple meeting groups so that she wouldn't have the time to write her articles, and when she'd been having problems in her duty, not only had I not helped her, but I'd scolded her until she became passive and constrained. I knew that she was of good caliber and was worth training, and that I should've been helping her more. But I'd been envious of her abilities, and I hadn't wanted anyone else to be better than me. When I realized that she was better than me, I'd become jealous and spiteful. To maintain my own status and reputation, not only did I not help her, but I oppressed her and tried to destroy her enthusiasm for writing articles. I was so malicious and despicable! God had graced me, allowing me to train in performing watering duty. I hadn't performed my duty properly to repay God's love, but had instead been jealous of Wenjing's abilities and vied with her for fame and gain. I was without a shred of conscience or reason. I felt filled with remorse and self-blame, so I prayed to God, asking Him to guide me to find the source of this problem.

Afterward, I read God's words: **"Satan uses fame and gain to control man's thoughts, until all people can think of is fame and gain. They struggle for fame and gain, suffer hardships for fame and gain, endure humiliation for fame and gain, sacrifice everything they have for fame and gain, and they will make any judgment or decision for the sake of fame and gain. In this way, Satan binds people with invisible shackles, and they have neither the strength nor the courage to throw them off. They unknowingly bear these shackles and trudge ever onward with**

great difficulty. For the sake of this fame and gain, mankind shuns God and betrays Him and becomes increasingly wicked. In this way, therefore, one generation after another is destroyed in the midst of Satan's fame and gain" (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique VI). As I pondered God's words, I understood that fame and gain were shackles that Satan uses to bind us, and tools used by Satan to corrupt us. I had been unable to free myself from the shackles and restraints of fame and gain because my life goals, ideas and views had always been wrong. I hadn't been conducting myself based on God's words and in accordance with His demands—I had been doing so in accordance with the satanic rules of living which Satan instills in us of, "Stand out above the rest," "Man struggles upwards; water flows downwards," and "Men should always strive to be better than their contemporaries." Whether it was at school or working in society, I had always struggled day and night to win fame and gain, to be number one and satisfy my ambition to stand out from the crowd. After believing in God, I had still lived in thrall to reputation and status. When I was praised and held in high esteem by brothers and sisters in my duty, and my desire for fame, gain, and status was being met, I would revel in the joy of standing out and I'd feel so happy. But, when I saw that Sister Wenjing was better than me, I'd grown jealous of her abilities. I was afraid that she would outshine me and constitute a threat to my position, so I'd done everything I could to suppress and oppress her without sparing a thought for the interests of God's house, or for her feelings. In that moment, I saw clearly that I'd become a devoted slave to fame and gain, and that in the hunt for those things I'd lost my conscience and reason. I'd become insidious, malicious, growing more and more selfish and mean-spirited, and I had lived out nothing but an image of the devil Satan. Fame, gain, and status had truly become the tools by which Satan had corrupted and

ensnared me into resisting and betraying God. I thought of those antichrists who had been expelled from God's house before: They had prized status above all else. For the sake of status, they had excluded and oppressed their brothers and sisters and had punished and expelled people at will. In the end, they committed all kinds of evil and were eliminated. I'd revealed my own antichrist's disposition in the way I'd treated and behaved toward Sister Wenjing, and I knew that if I didn't accept God's judgment and purification, and earnestly repent, then sooner or later I'd be eliminated too just like those antichrists. I saw that I was in a dangerous state, that the darkness in my spirit and my failures in my duty were God's stern judgment and discipline. God's will was that I should reflect on myself and turn back, and quit the wrong path I was following, before it was too late.

So, I prayed to God, and asked Him to guide me toward the path of practice. I then read this in God's words: **"Consider this: What sorts of changes must a person make if he wants to refrain from becoming ensnared in these conditions, be able to extricate himself from them, and become liberated from the vexations and bondage of these things? What must a person obtain before he is truly able to be free and liberated? On the one hand, he must see through things: Fame and fortune and positions are but tools and methods that Satan uses to corrupt people, to entrap them, to harm them, and to cause their depravity. In theory, you must first gain a clear understanding of this. Furthermore, you must learn to let go of these things and set them aside. ... You must learn to let go and set aside these things, to recommend others, and to allow them to stand out. Do not struggle or rush to take advantage the moment you encounter an opportunity to stand out or obtain glory. You must learn to back off, but must not delay the performing of your duty. Be a person who works in quiet**

obscurity, and who does not show off to others while you loyally perform your duty. The more you let go of your prestige and status, and the more you let go of your own interests, the more peaceful you will become, and the more space will open up within your heart and the more your state will improve. The more you struggle and compete, the darker your state will be. If you do not believe it, try it and see! If you want to turn this sort of state around, and not be controlled by these things, then you must first set them aside and give them up” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Give Your True Heart to God, and You Can Obtain the Truth). **“The functions are not the same. There is one body. Each does his duty, each in his place and doing his very best—for each spark there is one flash of light—and seeking maturity in life. Thus will I be satisfied”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 21). God’s words showed me the path of practice. They showed me that, when jealous thoughts occurred to me, I must pray to God and forsake my own flawed intent, cast aside my own personal interests, put the work of God’s house before all else, and be considerate toward God’s will. All of us have our own strengths and weaknesses—but God’s will is that we learn from each other’s strengths and compensate for our weaknesses, so that everyone can stand at their post and serve their purpose as best they can. Sister Wenjing was of good caliber, one who pursued the truth. The reason God’s house arranged for her to work with me was not so that I would become jealous of her abilities and compete with her in showing off, but so that I could learn from her strengths and make up for my own weaknesses. This was God’s kindness toward me. I had to correct my attitude; Sister Wenjing was better than me and had her strong points, I had to face the facts, and admit to my own weaknesses and shortcomings. I had to learn from my sister. I’d been doing this duty for a while and

understood more of the principles. As such, I had to do what I could to help my sister, so that we could do our duty together in harmony.

I later approached Sister Wenjing and opened up to her about the corruptions I'd been revealing. I apologized to her, and she opened her heart to me and fellowshiped about what she'd learned in this situation. She comforted me and encouraged me, and I felt so very ashamed and guilty. Afterward, when I saw her having difficulties in her duty, I'd sometimes think to myself: "If I help her resolve this problem, the leaders will only see her doing a good job. No one will know what I did to help her. The opportunity to stand out and show off will be hers alone." Because of this, I'd feel a little reluctant to help her—but I'd quickly become aware that, once again, I was trying to compete with her for fame and gain, and I would pray for God's help in setting right my motives, and would take the initiative to go help her. Over time, my state improved. I no longer felt that pain and dejection I used to have in the bottom of my heart, and my relationship with Sister Wenjing became much more harmonious. Sister Wenjing would fellowship with me openly about her state or what she had gained, and my heart was filled with sweetness and joy.

Going through this experience allowed me to recognize the true corruption of my jealousy and my malicious humanity. It caused me to despise myself, while at the same time helping me to come to some practical understanding of God's righteous disposition. It helped me learn how to escape from the shackles and restraints of my own jealousy, and I tasted the peace and stability that come from conducting myself in accordance with God's word the truth. It gave me the will to pursue the truth, cast off my corrupt disposition, and do my duty well. Thanks be to the salvation of God!

43. In Letting Go of Selfishness, I Am Liberated

By Xiaowei, China

Almighty God says: **“In the dispositions of normal people there is no crookedness or deceitfulness, people have a normal relationship with each other, they do not stand alone, and their lives are neither mediocre nor decadent. So, too, is God exalted among all; His words permeate among man, people live in peace with one another and under the care and protection of God, the earth is filled with harmony, without the interference of Satan, and the glory of God holds the utmost importance among man. Such people are like angels: pure, vibrant, never complaining about God, and devoting all their efforts solely to God’s glory on earth”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Interpretations of the Mysteries of “God’s Words to the Entire Universe”, Chapter 16). God’s words show us that a normal person’s disposition contains no crookedness, deceit, selfishness, and despicableness. Sincerely taking on God’s commission, working harmoniously with brothers and sisters, and doing all they can for their duty are the most basic things a person should be able to do. I used to live by satanic philosophies such as “Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost” and “Once a student knows everything the master knows, the master will lose his livelihood.” I was selfish, despicable, crooked, and crafty, totally lacking a human likeness. It wasn’t until I experienced the judgment and chastisement of God’s words that these satanic dispositions of mine began to change.

It was in June of 2018 when Brother Zhang joined our team to partner with me in my duty. At the time I thought, “I’ve been doing this duty for a while now, so I’ve gotten a grasp on the principles and I’ve seen some results. Maybe at some point I’ll leave this team to take on a greater

responsibility. I need to help Brother Zhang get up to speed as quickly as possible so that he can take on the work within our team.” I proceeded to teach him the basic skills I’d learned in my duty. Three months later, I saw that Brother Zhang had a basic grasp of everything and he was making really rapid progress. At that point, I started to feel threatened, thinking, “Brother Zhang has been improving so quickly in his duty. If this continues, won’t he soon surpass me? If the leader finds out how fast his progress is, won’t he give him an important position?” When this occurred to me, I thought to myself, “No, I need to hold back. I can’t share everything I know with him anymore.” From then on in our work, when I found Brother Zhang’s skills were a little lacking, I just told him a few superficial things without fully sharing my knowledge. I was aware that it wasn’t the right thing to do, but then I thought about the old saying, “Once a student knows everything the master knows, the master will lose his livelihood.” With him in the limelight, how could I make a good show of myself? I couldn’t let him overtake me. As we continued to work together, whatever Brother Zhang asked me about, I’d give him a partial response and keep the rest to myself.

Not long after that, the leader sought out Brother Zhang to discuss an important task. My heart quickened when I heard about this. I thought, “I’ve been in the team longer than Brother Zhang. Why wouldn’t the leader want to talk to me? Am I not as good as him? I’ve been the one training him, but now he’s the golden child and I’m pushed aside. He’s in the limelight and I’m forgotten. If I keep teaching him, won’t he learn even faster? If he gets an important position, who will look up to me then?” So in our work together from then on, when I saw Brother Zhang run into difficulties, I didn’t want to help him out. Our progress suffered as a result of these things not being resolved in a timely fashion, and this ended up

holding up the church's work. I felt a little guilty and uncomfortable, but I didn't reflect on myself at all. One day my armpit suddenly started itching, and I just couldn't get it to stop. Even applying an ointment didn't help. The next day, my arm started hurting so much I couldn't move it. I realized that this condition was no coincidence, so I came before God in prayer and seeking. I said, "Oh God, this condition has started so suddenly. I know that Your good will is behind it. But I'm too insensitive and I don't know what Your will is. Please enlighten me and guide me."

One day during my devotionals, these words of God suddenly came to mind: **"If you are unwilling to dedicate all you have, if you keep it hidden and tucked away, are slippery in your actions..."** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. People Can Only Truly Be Happy by Being Honest). This was a wake-up call for me. I'd been living in a state of vying for name and gain, afraid that this brother would surpass me, so I was never aboveboard in our work, and I didn't want to share my knowledge with him. I saw that this was God warning me with that condition, so that I would reflect on myself. I later read this passage of God's words: **"Unbelievers have a certain kind of corrupt disposition. When they teach other people a piece of professional knowledge or a skill, they believe in the idea that 'Once a student knows everything the master knows, the master will lose his livelihood.' They believe if they teach everything they know to others, then no one will look up to them anymore and they will have lost their status. For this reason, they feel a need to withhold some of this knowledge, teaching people only eighty percent of what they know and making sure they keep some tricks up their sleeves; they feel this is the only way they can show their rank of teacher. Always withholding information and keeping cards up their sleeves—what sort of disposition is this? It is deceitfulness. ... Do not**

think that you are doing just fine or that you have not withheld knowledge simply by telling everyone the most superficial or fundamental things; this will not do. Sometimes you may only teach a few theories or things that people can understand literally, but novices are unable to realize any of the essence or important points at all. You only give an overview, without elaborating or going into detail, all the while still thinking to yourself, ‘Well, anyway, I’ve told you, and I haven’t intentionally held anything back. If you don’t understand, it’s because your caliber is too poor, so don’t blame me. We’ll just have to see how God leads you now.’ Such deliberation contains deceit, does it not? Is it not selfish and ignoble? Why can you not teach people everything in your heart and everything you understand? Why do you withhold knowledge instead? This is a problem with your intentions and your disposition” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only

by Seeking the Truth in Everything Can One Enter Truth Reality). God’s words revealed precisely my own situation. I didn’t want to teach the skills I’d learned to him for the sake of my own name and position. I was afraid that he’d get the hang of it and leave me in the dust, thinking that once a student knows everything the master knows, the master will lose his livelihood. By always holding back, wasn’t I being too selfish, despicable, crooked, and deceitful? I also thought about when Brother Zhang had just joined our team. My motivation for instructing him had been so that he could take on the team’s work as soon as possible. I’d then have someone to hand my duty off to because I’d been hoping to take on a more important position. But when I saw how quickly he picked things up and that the leader really valued him, I became really concerned. I was worried that if he kept doing well, he’d surpass me sooner or later, that he’d supplant me. As a result, I didn’t want to share what I knew with him. Sometimes when I knew he’d encountered

difficulties in his duty, I didn't want to help him, which ended up delaying the church's work. I saw that I was always working to protect my own name and position without giving any consideration to the work of God's house. I really was so selfish and deceitful. Without God's timely discipline, having me develop that condition, I still wouldn't have reflected on myself. I then read these words of God: **"Since gaining faith, you have eaten and drunk of God's words; you have accepted His judgment and chastisement and accepted His salvation. However, if the principles by which you act and the direction in which you do things and conduct yourself as a person have not changed, if you are the same as the unbelievers, will God acknowledge you as one who has faith? He will not. He will say you are still walking the path of the unbelievers. Thus, whether you are fulfilling your duty or learning professional knowledge, you must adhere to principles in everything you do. You must treat everything you do in accordance with the truth, and practice in accordance with the truth. You must use the truth to resolve problems, to resolve the corrupt dispositions that have been revealed in you, and to resolve your erroneous ways and thoughts. You must continuously surmount these. For one thing, you must examine yourself. Once you have done so, if you discover a corrupt disposition, you must resolve it, subdue it, and forsake it. Once you have resolved these problems, when you no longer do things based on your corrupt dispositions, and when you can let go of your motives and interests and practice according to the truth principle, only then will you be doing what one who truly follows God is supposed to do"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only by Seeking the Truth in Everything Can One Enter Truth Reality). **"You must take the essence and main points of that professional knowledge—the things others have not fathomed or realized—and tell them to people so that**

they can all bring their strengths to bear, and thence figure out even more numerous, more profound, and more mature things. If you contribute all of these things, they will be beneficial to people who are fulfilling this duty as well as to the work of God's house. ... When most people are first introduced to some specific aspect of professional knowledge, they can only comprehend its literal meaning, whereas the part that involves the main points and essence takes practice for a period of time before people can grasp it. If you have already grasped these finer points, you should tell them directly; do not make them take such a roundabout path and spend so much time to get there. This is your responsibility; it is what you should do. Only if you tell them what you believe to be the main points and essence will you not be withholding anything, and only then will you not be selfish" (The Word, Vol.

3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only by Seeking the Truth in Everything Can One Enter Truth Reality). From God's words I realized I needed to focus on self-reflection in my duty and seek the truth to resolve my satanic disposition. I needed to forsake my incorrect thoughts and ideas and be able to work as one with brothers and sisters in my duty. I realized that every one of us lacks so much, whether it's in the truth or in our work, so brothers and sisters need to help and support each other in their duties, and to fellowship on what they understand without holding anything back. By making up for each other's shortcomings this way, we're much less likely to take detours. In fact, me being a bit more skilled than Brother Zhang was entirely due to God's kindness. I should have been considerate of God's will, let go of my selfishness, and taught him everything I knew so he could perform his duty well as soon as possible. Only that would have been in line with God's will. As soon as I realized that, I hurriedly came before God in prayer, willing to forsake my own incorrect thinking and no longer live by my satanic

dispositions. I later sought out Brother Zhang to have an honest chat with him about what state I'd been in, and to dissect these satanic dispositions of mine. I also shared the key points of the skills I possessed with him. When I began to practice this way, I felt much more at ease, and that health issue cleared up before I knew it.

I thought that, after going through that, I had already changed, but these satanic dispositions were really deeply entrenched. As soon as the right conditions came up, I just couldn't help but let those poisons show again.

In March 2019, Brother Zhang and I were elected at the same time to be church leaders. At first, we worked really well together. Whether it was an issue within the church, or a difficulty we ran into, we were able to seek the truth together to resolve it. But then one day, I overheard someone in the church say, "Brother Zhang's fellowship on the truth is quite practical, and he's really responsible in his duty." Hearing this sent me into inner turmoil and I thought, "If I'm outdone by Brother Zhang, won't that be humiliating?" In all of our work discussions after that, I only pointed out mistakes and flaws and kept the paths of practice to resolve them to myself. Sometimes when he came to me to seek, I'd just grit my teeth and throw him a bit of a bone, afraid that if he understood too much, he'd just go resolve the issues without me getting to show off. I remember there was one time when he was about to go offer support to a few brothers and sisters experiencing weakness. He was afraid that without the right kind of fellowship, it would be fruitless, so he came to consult with me on what truths would be best to focus on. But my consideration at the time was: If I told him everything I knew and he went and dealt with the problem, the brothers and sisters would definitely look up to him, and then what would I share in fellowship next time? Wouldn't that make him look better than me?

So at the time I thought, “No, I have to hold back something for me to fellowship on next time so that they can see I’m the one more capable of resolving issues.” I only gave Brother Zhang a brief overview but mentioned no specifics, or anything really important. Since I was harboring my own selfishness and didn’t want to share everything I knew with him, I intentionally avoided Brother Zhang in our work together and we spent less time discussing things with each other than we used to. At times I did feel really guilty and thought to myself, “By doing my duty this way, I’m not working harmoniously with my brother, and it’s not something God would delight in.” But then I thought, “If he surpasses me, everyone will look up to him,” so I didn’t want to practice the truth anymore. I was constantly in such an unyielding state during that time, and God’s righteous disposition came upon me. My mind was constantly in a whirl. My fellowship in gatherings lacked any light and I wasn’t achieving anything in my duty, and I’d start to nod off really early every night. I was also feeling more and more uneasy. At that point I realized that God had departed from me, and then I became afraid. I rushed to come before God and pray. “Oh God, I’ve been too selfish and despicable. I know that this disgusts You, but I can’t help myself. I can’t rid myself of them. God, please enlighten me so that I may come to a truer understanding of my own nature and essence.”

After my prayer I read this passage of God’s words: **“Until people have experienced God’s work and gained the truth, it is Satan’s nature that takes charge and dominates them from within. What, specifically, does that nature entail? For example, why are you selfish? Why do you protect your own position? Why do you have such strong emotions? Why do you enjoy those unrighteous things? Why do you like those evils? What is the basis for your fondness for such things? Where do these things come from? Why are you so happy to accept them? By**

now, you have all come to understand that the main reason behind all these things is that Satan's poison is within you. As for what Satan's poison is, it can be fully expressed with words. For example, if you ask some evildoers why they committed evil, they will answer, 'Because it's every man for himself, and the devil take the hindmost.' This single phrase expresses the very root of the problem. Satan's logic has become people's lives. They may do things for this purpose or that, but they are only doing it for themselves. Everyone thinks that since it is every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost, people should live for their own sakes, and do everything in their power to secure a good position for the sake of food and fine clothing. 'Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost'—this is the life and the philosophy of man, and it also represents human nature. These words of Satan are precisely the poison of Satan, and when people internalize it, it becomes their nature. Satan's nature is exposed through these words; they represent it completely. This poison becomes people's lives as well as the foundation of their existence, and corrupted humanity has been consistently dominated by this poison for thousands of years” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. How to Walk the Path of Peter). Reading God's words showed me that I just couldn't help but act selfishly and despicably because Satan's poisons and philosophies like “Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost” had become my very nature. I'd taken them as positive things, as rules to live by, thinking that was how people should live, that it was the only way to protect ourselves. As a result, I became increasingly selfish and contemptible, only thinking of myself. I was constantly afraid that Brother Zhang would be better than me in the duty we performed together, so whenever we talked about work, I'd just gloss over things, doing the bare minimum, without sharing everything I

knew. When Brother Zhang ran into problems in his duty and came to me in seeking, it wasn't the work of God's house that was my concern, but it was that if I taught him everything, I'd no longer have a chance to shine in the church. Even when I knew very well that it wasn't the right approach, I still didn't want to help him. I could see that I wasn't doing my duty out of consideration for God's will or to uphold the work of God's house, but that I was doing it in pursuit of personal name and status. It really was incredibly selfish and crafty of me. Relying on satanic poisons in my duty, how could I possibly gain God's guidance and blessings? I thought that by not teaching what I knew to anyone else I could be the best in the church and be esteemed by everyone, but it actually turned out that the more I held back, the darker my spirit became, and the more I was without God's guidance. It reached the point where I couldn't even do what I'd been able to do before. These words from the Lord Jesus then came to mind: **“For whoever has, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whoever has not, from him shall be taken away even that he has”** (Matthew 13:12). Going through that made me truly appreciate God's righteous disposition. When I gave it more thought, I saw that being able to see some issues in my duty was entirely due to God's guidance and enlightenment, and without the guidance of God's words, I was blind, unable to understand anything, and unable to resolve any problems. But I was totally lacking self-awareness, and I shamelessly mistook the Holy Spirit's enlightenment for my own ability. Hadn't I been trying to rob God of His glory? God can see into people's hearts and minds. I knew that if I kept being selfish and contemptible, I'd certainly be spurned and eliminated by God. At that thought I quickly came before God to pray, saying, “God, I won't be so self-seeking and contemptible in my duty anymore. I really want to work well with Brother Zhang and do my duty well.”

After that, I read these words of God: **“Do not always do things for your own sake and do not constantly consider your own interests; give no thought to your own status, prestige, or reputation. Also do not consider the interests of man. You must first give thought to the interests of God’s house, and make them your first priority. You should be considerate of God’s will and begin by contemplating whether or not you have been impure in the fulfillment of your duty, whether you have done your utmost to be loyal, done your best to fulfill your responsibilities, and given your all, as well as whether or not you have wholeheartedly given thought to your duty and the work of God’s house. You must give consideration to these things. Think about them frequently, and it will be easier for you to perform your duty well”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Give Your True Heart to God, and You Can Obtain the Truth). **“When you reveal yourself to be selfish and ignoble, and have become conscious of this, you should seek the truth: What should I do to be in line with God’s will? How should I act so that it benefits everyone? That is, you must begin by setting your own interests aside, gradually giving them up according to your stature, a little at a time. After you have experienced this a few times, you will have set them aside completely, and as you do so, you will feel more and more steadfast. The more you set your interests aside, the more you will feel that as a human being, you should have conscience and reason. You will feel that without selfish motives, you are being a straightforward, upright person, and you are doing things entirely in order to satisfy God. You will feel that such behavior makes you worthy of being called ‘human,’ and that in living this way on earth, you are being open and honest, you are being a genuine person, you have a clear conscience, and are worthy of all the things bestowed upon you by God. The more**

you live like this, the more steadfast and the brighter you will feel. As such, will you not have set foot upon the right track?” (The Word, Vol. 3. The

Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Give Your True Heart to God, and You Can Obtain the Truth).

After reading this, I understood that if I wanted to do my duty well, I first had to think about how to uphold the work of God’s house, how to put my all into my duty, and how to do it with the utmost responsibility. God’s focus is on our attitude in our duty. His hope is that we face Him with a genuine heart, that we put our all into doing our duty well, and that we become people of conscience and humanity. Once I understood His will, I said a prayer to God within my heart, telling Him I was ready to let go of my selfishness and stop considering my personal interests, and that I would just do whatever benefited the church and my brothers’ and sisters’ lives. After that, I went and had a talk with Brother Zhang, telling him about my selfish, despicable, and deceitful motives. We also sought the truth together on the problems and flaws in our work to resolve them, and I shared fellowship on everything I knew, without reservation. When I practiced in that way, I experienced such a feeling of peace. I felt how wonderful it is to be that kind of person, to be open and aboveboard. My state gradually improved and I started seeing some results in my duty. Even though at times I still had my selfish and despicable thinking, the moment I thought about how that disgusted God, I’d come before God in prayer, forsake my incorrect thinking, and wish to practice according to His words.

Having undergone that experience, I truly felt that doing our duty relying on satanic dispositions and Satan’s poisons can only make us more and more selfish, despicable, and self-serving. We’ll lose all human likeness, not only causing ourselves pain, but also becoming unable to work well with others. Plus, it does nothing but damage the work of God’s house. When I practiced the truth as an honest person according to God’s words,

and no longer schemed for my own interests, I had the Holy Spirit's enlightenment and guidance in my duty, and I felt inner peace. Thanks be to God! It was the judgment and chastisement of God's words that gave me a bit of understanding of my satanic dispositions, and I was finally able to practice a bit of the truth and live out some human likeness.

44. I Finally See the Truth About Myself

By Shen Xinwei, Italy

My duty in the church in 2018 was translating documents, working with Sister Zhang and Sister Liu. We got along great. During a gathering, we fellowshiped on how a false leader was discerned. This was Sister Liu's assessment of the false leader: "He switches people around without any principles. He transferred Sister Zhang out but kept another sister on the team who isn't as attentive or hard-working in her duty." When the other leader read this to brothers and sisters, my face immediately went bright red. I felt Sister Liu's words were particularly harsh. I forced myself to keep my composure, but inside I was in turmoil. With only three of us on the team, I was sure I was the one she'd mentioned. I felt like everyone would think I wasn't attentive or hard-working in my duty. How could I hold my head up after that? I had a chip on my shoulder against Sister Liu from then on and our relationship grew more distant.

Sister Liu was chosen as team leader before long. She was really conscientious, carefully checking everything I translated. I kept a positive attitude at first, but after a while I began to feel resistant to her. I felt I'd been doing that duty for quite a while but she still didn't trust me, as if my skills were lacking. She also gave me suggestions from time to time, so I felt like she looked down on me and was making things difficult. What I really couldn't stand was that when we discussed our work, she'd always bring up my shortcomings in front of the person in charge. I thought, "Aren't you just trying to make me look bad in front of him?" My resentment toward her grew and grew, and that chip on my shoulder got bigger. In our work together after that, I just hated the sight of her and was unwilling to listen to her. I didn't like her following up on my work and I'd

pull a long face whenever she gave me pointers. Sometimes I'd think about how I could make her look bad and cut her down to size. I didn't want to help her when I saw issues in her duty, but instead thought less of her and even hoped she'd hit a wall in her duty to teach her a lesson. Once, Sister Liu opened up in a gathering, saying she felt stifled by me in our cooperation, that I was too hot-tempered and she didn't know how to work with me. My temper flared up just as soon as she said that. I thought, "Aren't you just trying to expose me to the others under the guise of opening up? Now that everyone knows my temper is stifling for you, what will they think of me?" I felt angrier the more I thought about it. I felt like she was trying to make me look bad. I developed a bias against her and sat there pouting in silence for the rest of the gathering. Afterward, Sister Liu noticed I seemed a bit off, so she came and said to me quietly, "You look upset, and you didn't say anything in the gathering. If there's something on your mind, I'm happy to talk about it. You can let me know about any shortcomings I may have, too." But I couldn't stand the sight of her and felt nothing but aversion toward her. I thought, "You really have to ask? Who'd be happy to hear you 'open up' this way?" Then she sat down right next to me. I shot her a look, full of disdain, and just couldn't contain my anger when I thought about her bad-mouthing me in front of everyone. I let loose on her about her faults and the corruption she showed, saying she lacked wisdom, intentionally made others look bad, stifled people, and that she was really arrogant. I went on and on. I felt placated when I saw her looking dejected with her head hanging. I'd vented all that pent-up anger I'd been holding on to. Then Sister Liu said to me, "I never imagined I had hurt you so much. I really apologize." I felt a pang of guilt when I saw her turn away from me and furtively wipe away her tears. Had I gone too far? Would this put her into a negative state? But then I thought, "I was just being honest. I

said this so she could know herself.” At that, my guilt just evaporated. Sister Liu was even more constrained by me after that, and she no longer dared to follow up on my work, much less give me suggestions.

A few days later, our church leader had everyone write assessments of team leaders so she could evaluate their effectiveness according to the principles. I was secretly delighted to hear this. I was eager to expose all of the corruption Sister Liu had revealed so everyone could know her for what she was, and she could be taken down a notch. At this thought, I felt a fleeting uneasiness and realized my thinking was wrong, that I should be fair and objective, and accept God’s scrutiny. I intended to be fair and objective in my evaluation, but when I thought about how Sister Liu always put me on the spot, I was just overflowing with resentment. I poured all of my biases against her into that assessment, hoping that the leader would seriously deal with her or even transfer her out. I’d be happy as long as she wasn’t in my team. Sister Liu was dismissed before long. This news left me feeling uneasy. I thought, “Did that have anything to do with what I wrote? I just wrote about some of her corruption, but that shouldn’t have gotten her dismissed, right?” I saw Sister Liu was in a negative state after that and I had a vague sense of guilt. I didn’t have any energy for my duty.

I talked to the leader about my state two days later, who told me that Sister Liu had been dismissed mostly because of her limited caliber and she wasn’t up to being a team leader. It had nothing to do with my assessment. But she did say that I was relentless about her shortcomings and couldn’t treat people fairly, that I was vindictive and had a malicious disposition. My heart dropped into my stomach when I heard that. Aren’t “vindictive” and “malicious disposition” things we say about evil people? For a few days I was hit with waves of distress whenever I thought about what she’d said. I wondered if I really was a malicious person. I came before God in prayer in

the midst of my pain: “Oh God, the leader said I have a malicious disposition, but I can’t see it. Please enlighten me so that I may truly know myself.”

I read this passage of God’s words after praying: **“Are you capable of thinking up various ways to punish people because they are not to your liking or because they do not get along with you? Have you ever done that sort of thing before? How much of it have you done? Were you not always indirectly belittling people, making cutting remarks, and being sarcastic toward them? (Yes.) In what states were you in when you were doing such things? At the time, you were venting, and felt happy; you had gained the upper hand. Afterward, however, you thought to yourselves, ‘I did such a despicable thing. I am not God-fearing, and I have treated that person so unfairly.’ Deep down, did you feel guilty? (Yes.) Though you are not God-fearing, you at least have some sense of conscience. Thus, are you still capable of doing this kind of thing again in the future? Can you contemplate attacking and seeking revenge against people, giving them a hard time and showing them who is the boss whenever you despise them and fail to get along with them, or whenever they do not obey or listen to you? Will you say, ‘If you don’t do what I want, I’ll find an opportunity to punish you without anyone knowing about it. No one will find out, but I will make you submit before me; I’ll show you my power. After that, no one will dare to mess with me!’ Tell Me this: What sort of humanity is possessed by a person who does such a thing? In terms of his humanity, he is malicious. Measured against the truth, he does not revere God”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The Five States Necessary to Be on the Right Track in One’s Faith). I was gutted after reading God’s words of judgment. They had revealed my precise state. Thinking back, Sister Liu and I had worked

really well together at first. I developed a bias against her when her assessment of someone else touched upon me and hurt my pride in front of other people. She started bringing up my deficiencies after she became team leader. I felt like I lost face and was being put on the spot. She started to really irritate me and I wanted to make a fool of her. When she opened up about her state to find a resolution, I thought she was just exposing my shortcomings and shaming me, compromising my image in front of brothers and sisters. My bias against her grew and I magnified her problems to expose her, acting out of malice and making her negative. I used my assessment of her as a chance to take revenge. I wrote out all of her shortcomings and her corruption that I'd noticed without mentioning her strong points at all. I just wanted the leader to gain discernment on her, and have her transferred out. Thinking back on the way I'd acted was incredibly uncomfortable for me. I'd nursed a grievance only because Sister Liu's words had touched upon my face and status, so I took a hostile stance against her. I did whatever I felt like doing. I realized I was totally lacking reverence for God and I did have a really malicious nature! I used to think I got along really well with brothers and sisters and that I was eager to help anyone facing difficulties. I thought I was a good person because I did some good things. Now I realized that was only because no one had compromised my personal interests. My satanic disposition came out in full force when my interests were involved. I couldn't help but strike out and get revenge. I realized that without resolving that disposition, I could do evil at any point. That was so dangerous!

I reflected on myself after that. If I was capable of that kind of evil, what thoughts were controlling me? I read these words from God: **“The source of man’s opposition and rebelliousness against God is his corruption by Satan. Because of Satan’s corruption, man’s conscience**

has grown numb; he is immoral, his thoughts are degenerate, and he has a backward mental outlook. Before he was corrupted by Satan, man naturally followed God and obeyed His words after hearing them. He was naturally of sound sense and conscience, and of normal humanity. After being corrupted by Satan, man's original sense, conscience, and humanity grew dull and were impaired by Satan. Thus, he has lost his obedience and love toward God. Man's sense has become aberrant, his disposition has become the same as that of an animal, and his rebelliousness toward God is ever more frequent and grievous. Yet man still neither knows nor recognizes this, and merely opposes and rebels blindly. Man's disposition is revealed in expressions of his sense, insight, and conscience; because his sense and insight are unsound, and his conscience has grown supremely dull, thus his disposition is rebellious against God" (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. To Have an Unchanged Disposition Is to Be in Enmity to God). **"People think like this: 'If you're not going to be kind, then I won't be just! If you're rude to me, then I'll be rude to you as well! If you don't treat me with dignity, why would I treat you with dignity?' What sort of thinking is this? Is it not a vengeful way of thinking? In the views of an ordinary person, is this type of perspective not viable? 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth'; 'Here's a taste of your own medicine'—among unbelievers, these are all rationales that hold water and completely conform to human notions. However, as someone who believes in God—as someone who seeks to understand the truth and seeks a change in disposition—would you say that such words are right or wrong? What should you do to discern them? Where do such things come from? They come from the malicious nature of Satan; they contain venom, and they contain the true face of Satan in all its maliciousness and ugliness. They contain**

the very essence of that nature. What is the nature of the perspectives, thoughts, expressions, speech, and even actions that contain that nature's essence? Are they not of Satan? Are these aspects of Satan in line with humanity? Are they in line with the truth, or with truth reality? Are they the actions that followers of God should do, and the thoughts and points of view that they should possess? (No.)" (The Word,

Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only Resolving Your Corrupt Disposition Can Free You From a Negative State). I realized that people are so corrupt and evil entirely because of Satan's corruption. Through formal education and social influences, Satan, the devil, steeps us in all of its poisons, like "Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost," "I will not attack unless I am attacked; if I am attacked, I will certainly counterattack," "Here's a taste of your own medicine," and "It is never too late for a gentleman to take his revenge." People take these as their laws for survival without even realizing it. They become more arrogant, crafty, selfish, and malicious all the time. People aren't genuinely caring or forgiving, and there's no real love. They just get offended and keep their distance when anything touches their personal interests. They might even make enemies or take revenge. People become colder and more distant and lose all sense of normal humanity. I'd been steeped in that kind of thinking and lived by these things since I was little. When someone else touched on my own interests, I couldn't help but hate them and take revenge. In my time with Sister Liu, she said and did things that compromised my interests, so I became resentful and jumped at my chance to get back at her. I wanted her to see what I was made of so she wouldn't dare offend me again. I even wanted to drive her out. How was my behavior any different from the antichrists and evil people the church had expelled? Those people just wanted others' approval and praise but couldn't tolerate any frank words that exposed their corruption. They would

strike out against anyone who said or did anything to offend them. With all their evil, they ended up offending God's disposition, they angered others, and they got kicked out of the church. They lost their chance at salvation for good. And I was lashing out at Sister Liu just because her words had wounded my pride. I'd done nothing but hurt her. I was doing evil! I saw what terrible humanity I had, that I had the same evil nature and essence as an antichrist, an evildoer, and this was disgusting to God. If I didn't repent right away, I'd just sink into evil and be punished by God just like an antichrist, an evildoer! This scared me more as I thought about it. I came before God in prayer: "Oh God, I'm so lacking in humanity. I was living in my corrupt disposition and lashed out at my sister. I don't resemble a human at all. Without You creating this situation to deal with me, I never would have reflected on myself. I would have kept doing evil and hurting her. God, I wish to repent. I don't want to live by Satan's poisons anymore. Please guide me to be a conscientious, reasonable person with humanity."

I read this in God's words after that: **"Love and hatred are things which normal humanity should possess, but you must differentiate clearly between what you love and what you hate. In your heart, you should love God, love the truth, love positive things, and love your brothers and sisters, whereas you should hate the devil Satan, hate negative things, hate antichrists, and hate wicked people. If you harbor hatred for your brothers and sisters, then you will be inclined to suppress them and take revenge on them; this would be very frightening. Some people only have thoughts of hatred and evil ideas. After a while, if such people cannot get along with the person they hate, they will start to distance themselves from him; however, they do not let this affect their duties or influence their normal interpersonal relationships, because they have God in their hearts and they revere**

Him. They do not want to offend God, and are afraid to do so. Though these people might harbor certain views about someone, they never put those thoughts into action or even utter a single word that is out of line, unwilling to offend God. What sort of behavior is this? This is an example of conducting themselves and handling things with principle and impartiality. You might be incompatible with someone's personality, and you may not like him, but when you work together with him, you remain impartial and will not vent your frustrations in doing your duty, sacrifice your duty, or take out your frustrations on the interests of God's family. You can do things according to principle; as such, you have a basic reverence for God. If you have a bit more than that, then when you see that someone has some faults or weaknesses—even if he has offended you or harmed your own interests—you still have it in you to help him. Doing so would be even better; it would mean that you are a person who possesses humanity, truth reality, and reverence for God” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The Five States Necessary to Be on the Right Track in One's Faith).

I saw from God's words that those who fear God can treat others according to principles of the truth. They may have some biases against brothers and sisters sometimes, but they're not willful in their interactions and they don't do anything to offend God or hurt others. People who don't fear God do whatever their vicious hearts desire, and that's doing evil and is condemned by God. Sister Liu was pretty direct, but what she said about me was honest. It wasn't to target me. She also took her duty seriously and responsibly and most of her suggestions were helpful for our work. I shouldn't have intentionally made things difficult with her. Later, I opened up to her about my corruption and apologized. Sister Liu said she thought nothing of it, and she fellowshipped some truth to help me. I felt ashamed

and hated myself even more. I didn't want to live by my corrupt disposition anymore. After that, when Sister Liu gave me suggestions or something she said or did wounded my pride, I was able to handle it properly and focus on seeking the truth and self-reflection. We could work well together again. This was a great relief for me. I give thanks for God's judgment which changed me in this small way.

45. Living Before God

By Yongsui, South Korea

Almighty God says, **“To enter into reality, one must turn everything toward real life. If, in believing in God, people cannot come to know themselves through entry into real life, and if they cannot live out normal humanity in real life, then they will become failures. Those who disobey God are all people who cannot enter into real life. They are all people who speak of humanity, but live out the nature of demons. They are all people who speak of the truth, but live out doctrines instead. Those who cannot live out the truth in real life are those who believe in God, but are detested and rejected by Him. You have to practice your entry in real life, know your own deficiencies, disobedience, and ignorance, and know your abnormal humanity and weaknesses. That way, your knowledge will be integrated into your actual condition and difficulties. Only this kind of knowledge is real and can allow you to truly grasp your own condition and achieve dispositional transformation”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Discussing Church Life and Real Life). **“In pursuit of life entry, one must examine one’s own words and deeds, thoughts and ideas with every matter encountered in one’s everyday life, and grasp one’s own states; following that, one must check them against the truth, seek the truth, and enter the truth reality of the truths one understands. During the course of entering truth reality, one must grasp one’s own states, and come frequently before God to pray to Him and beseech Him. One must also fellowship often with brothers and sisters with an open heart, seek the path of entry into truth reality, and seek the truth principle. Ultimately, one will come to know what dispositions one reveals in everyday life,**

whether or not God takes joy in them, whether or not the path one practices is accurate, whether or not one has checked the states found within oneself through self-examination against God's words, whether or not they checked them accurately, whether or not they accord with God's words, and whether or not one has truly made an achievement and made a positive entry regarding the states which accord with God's words. When you frequently live within these states, within these conditions, gradually, you will come to have a basic comprehension toward some truths and toward your practical states" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Knowing One's Disposition Is the Foundation of Changing It). God's words show us the path to life entry, which is to examine our every thought and action in everything that happens in real life, and then hold them up against the revelations of God's words, reflect on and know our corrupt dispositions and seek to use the truth to resolve them. This is the only way to truly know ourselves and enter into the reality of God's words.

Brother Chen shared one of his experiences at a gathering six months ago. When he'd finished, I thought that he'd been willful in his duty and had gone against the principles, and so had been pruned and dealt with. He'd just exercised some self-control without making excuses, and he'd appeared to submit. But as for why he'd been willful in his work, what corrupt dispositions had been controlling him or what the root cause was, he hadn't really reflected on or tried to understand these things, nor had he sought the truth to resolve them. His obedience was just him sticking to rules. It couldn't be called true submission. I wondered, "Should I mention this shortcoming to him?" But then I thought, "Brother Chen has been a believer longer than I have, and his understanding and experience surpass mine. If I make a suggestion to him, will I be like a child trying to talk big? Will it make me look arrogant? I'd better not say anything." When he'd

finished his fellowship, he asked us to mention any shortcomings we noticed to him. I wanted to point out his issue, but I just couldn't. I thought, "He's so much older than me. If I say he hasn't truly submitted and that he's just following rules, he'll lose so much face and I'll be putting him on the spot. If he doesn't accept it and says that I'm too arrogant and inexperienced, I'll be so embarrassed. I don't really know him, and it's not worth giving him a bad impression of me." I hesitated for a long while, and then said, "You have a wealth of experience and some practical understanding."

I felt uneasy after saying this. I could see his problems clearly but didn't breathe a word about them. Instead, I just said something nice that went against my conscience. There was nothing sincere or honest about it. I then thought about what we usually talked about during our gatherings over that period of time: We were supposed to reflect on and know ourselves every day, to see how many lies or watered-down truths we'd told, how many things we'd said motivated by personal aims, and what things we'd said or done which went against the truth. I realized that I'd done nothing but lie to Brother Chen. I knew that God exhorts us again and again to be honest, to call a spade a spade, to tell it like it is. And yet, I wasn't able to practice this most basic of requirements. At this point, I began to feel upset. I lost no time going before God in prayer to ask Him to guide me to know myself. I then read these words of God: **"You are all well-educated. You all pay attention to being refined and understated in your speech, as well as to the manner in which you speak: You are tactful, and have learned not to do damage to the self-respect and dignity of others. In your words and actions, you leave people room to maneuver. You do everything you can to put people at ease. You do not expose their scars or shortcomings, and you try not to hurt them or embarrass them."**

Such is the principle by which most people act. And what kind of principle is this? It is conniving, slippery, treacherous, and insidious. Hidden behind people's smiling faces are a lot of malicious, insidious, and despicable things. For example, when interacting with others, some people, as soon as they see that the other person has a bit of status, will start talking in a smooth, nice-sounding, flattering way to make the other person feel comfortable. But is that actually what they are thinking? They most certainly harbor intents and ulterior motives. Such people have darkness in their hearts and are so despicable. The way such people conduct themselves in life is disgusting and loathsome"

(The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Six Indicators of Life Growth).

God's words revealed exactly the state I was in. I wasn't remotely honest in my words, but was incredibly devious. I spoke in a roundabout way so I wouldn't hurt people, and I always said nice things. From the outside, it looked like I was thinking of others, but my real motives were to get others to speak well of me and to protect my own prestige and status. From listening to his experiences, I well knew that Brother Chen was sticking to rules too much, and I knew that this wasn't helpful for his life entry. But I thought that mentioning this would embarrass him and give him a bad impression of me, so I kept my mouth shut. Even when he asked us for suggestions, I still wasn't forthright. Instead I just flattered and deceived him. I was so sly and deceitful! Brother Chen asked us to point out his faults as he wanted to make up for his deficiencies and shortcomings, but not only did I fail in my responsibility to help him, I also just praised him to deceive him. Only then did I realize that I sounded nice and tactful, and no one was offended, but in the face of an issue I didn't practice the truth. That wasn't really being a good person at all, but being sly and deceitful. I used to think I was young and inexperienced, that I didn't know the ways of the

world. Only when exposed by the facts did I see that I was actually very cunning, and I began to detest myself. I didn't want to be so deceitful and dishonest anymore. I then prayed to God, willing to repent, to tell the truth and be an honest person as He requires.

I planned to write out the problems I'd discovered in Brother Chen and send them to him, but as I wrote I hesitated once again. I worried that I wasn't wording things appropriately, that it wouldn't go down well with him, and that he would think I was splitting hairs. What's more, since I hadn't mentioned it at the time, if I made a thing of it now, would he think I was making a fuss over nothing? "Perhaps I shouldn't do anything this time," I thought, "but speak up next time." But that thought left me feeling upset again. God hadn't arranged this situation just for me to understand myself, and nothing more. He was hoping that I would accept His words and put them into practice. If I just gave in and let it slide, wouldn't that be cheating God? I prayed to God again, saying, "I don't want to worry about Brother Chen's vanity anymore, or consider what others might think of me. Please God, guide me to practice the truth." Afterward, I contemplated Brother Chen's experience and found some relevant words of God. I wrote down the issues I'd noticed and a bit of my own understanding and sent it to Brother Chen. I felt much more at ease when I practiced in that way. I received a response from Brother Chen the very next day. He said he was very moved when he read my letter, and that writing to him about his issues had come from God's love. He realized that he hadn't focused on seeking the truth when matters arose, and that when he was pruned and dealt with, he'd just muddled his way through it. He wrote that he was ready to rectify the faults in the way he experienced things. When I finished reading his reply, I was so moved. I felt that I didn't need to worry so much in my interactions with brothers and sisters. I just had to have the right motive

behind pointing out an issue, and then they would be willing to accept it. All my worries had been my imagination, and I'd been under the control of my corrupt disposition. I also came to understand that relationships in the church don't rely on philosophies for living or deceitful tricks, but are built on putting God's words into practice and mutual honesty.

But I'd been so deeply corrupted by Satan and my corrupt disposition was so deeply rooted that when my prestige and interests were threatened, I found it hard to practice the truth.

Some time later, I found out that a young sister often read online novels. My heart began to race and I thought, "Most of these online novels are just man-made fictions. If her head gets filled up with them, she won't want to read God's words or perform her duty. Then, she'll lose the work of the Holy Spirit, and that would be such a great loss in her life. I have to raise this issue with her." But just as I was about to open my mouth, I hesitated: "Will she be put out and think I'm sticking my nose where it doesn't belong? If she doesn't accept what I say, then it will be so awkward seeing each other every day. Perhaps I should report it to the church leader and let the leader fellowship about it with her." But I knew this thinking was wrong. I had a responsibility to fellowship with her about it because I'd been the one to discover it. I shouldn't just pass the buck on to someone else. I thought about raising the issue with her several times after that, but each time I couldn't get the words out, and I didn't know where to start. This went on day after day until one day the church leader asked me about the sister's state. Only then did I tell the leader about this. To my surprise, the leader said she was busy with something else and asked me to fellowship with the sister. I realized that God was arranging this situation for me to see whether I could forsake my flesh and practice the truth. I thought about how I'd been feeling uneasy for a while. Especially when I

saw that sister, I was haunted by not having spoken with her. I hadn't shown her love or taken responsibility, and my conscience was suffering. I knew the dangers of getting wrapped up in online novels very well. The devil Satan uses these wicked trends to deceive and corrupt people, to control their thoughts and make them shun God, so that they're more and more degenerate and dispirited, until finally it devours them. I hadn't given the slightest thought to how the sister's life could be damaged, or about how her being distracted in her duty could cause great harm to the church's work. I'd been afraid of bringing it up and offending her, and had been walking on eggshells to maintain our relationship. I was being so selfish and despicable!

I then read these words of God: **“Many people believe that being a good person is actually easy, and simply requires speaking less and doing more, having a good heart, and not having any ill intent. They believe that this will ensure that they will prosper wherever they go, that people will like them, and that it is good enough just to be such a person. They even go so far as to not want to pursue the truth; they are satisfied just to be good people. They think that the issue of pursuing the truth and serving God is just too complicated; it requires understanding many truths, they think, and who can accomplish that? They just want to take an easier path—being good people and performing their duties—and think that that will be enough. Is this position tenable? Is being a good person really so simple? You will find plenty of good people in society speaking in a very lofty manner, and even though they outwardly seem not to have done any great evil, deep down they are deceitful and slippery. In particular, they are able to see which way the wind blows, and they are smooth and worldly in their eloquence. As I see it, such a ‘good person’ is a false one, a hypocrite;**

such a person is merely pretending to be good. All those who stick to a happy medium are the most sinister. They try not to offend anyone, they are people-pleasers, they go along with things, and no one can figure them out. A person like that is a living Satan!" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only by Putting the Truth Into Practice Can One Cast off the Shackles of a Corrupt Disposition). God's words pierced right to my heart as I saw that I was an "agreeable" person who always took the middle road, never offended anyone, and never pointed out anyone else's problems, exactly what God's words revealed. If I ever did say anything, I had to consider who I was talking to and the situation. I could never hurt a friendship or allow anyone to find fault with me. I'd seen that this sister had a problem and I'd wanted to tell her about it, but as soon as I thought that it might offend her, I avoided it time and time again, instead passing the buck onto the church leader. I realized that I was only thinking of myself, that I never did anything that would offend anyone, and that I didn't want my own interests harmed in any way. That was how I'd been behaving with my brothers and sisters. Sometimes when I saw that someone was in a bad state or revealing corruption, I would close my eyes to it, not mentioning it or fellowshiping on it. On the surface, I appeared to get on well with everyone. I seemed really considerate. But it was all false, all pretense. I hid away my true, heartfelt words, just putting on a facade. I was such a hypocrite! I'd blatantly deceived my brothers and sisters yet still wanted them to think well of me. I was so shameless! I saw that I was nothing but an insidious and deceitful yes-man, and a phony.

I then read some more of God's words: **"Until people have experienced God's work and gained the truth, it is Satan's nature that takes charge and dominates them from within. What, specifically, does that nature entail? For example, why are you selfish? Why do you**

protect your own position? Why do you have such strong emotions? Why do you enjoy those unrighteous things? Why do you like those evils? What is the basis for your fondness for such things? Where do these things come from? Why are you so happy to accept them? By now, you have all come to understand that the main reason behind all these things is that Satan's poison is within you. As for what Satan's poison is, it can be fully expressed with words. For example, if you ask some evildoers why they committed evil, they will answer, 'Because it's every man for himself, and the devil take the hindmost.' This single phrase expresses the very root of the problem. Satan's logic has become people's lives. They may do things for this purpose or that, but they are only doing it for themselves. Everyone thinks that since it is every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost, people should live for their own sakes, and do everything in their power to secure a good position for the sake of food and fine clothing. 'Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost'—this is the life and the philosophy of man, and it also represents human nature. These words of Satan are precisely the poison of Satan, and when people internalize it, it becomes their nature. Satan's nature is exposed through these words; they represent it completely. This poison becomes people's lives as well as the foundation of their existence, and corrupted humanity has been consistently dominated by this poison for thousands of years" (The Word,

Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. How to Walk the Path of Peter). These words gave me some understanding of the root cause of being a yes-man, which was mainly that Satan's philosophies and poisons were deeply entrenched within me. Having been poisoned by such things as "Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost," "Keeping silent on the faults of good friends makes for a long and good friendship" and "Speak good words in

harmony with others' feelings and reason, as being frank annoys others," I only ever thought about my own prestige and status. I wanted others to speak well of me in everything I did and I'd become very selfish, sly, and deceitful. Since I was little, my mom and dad always told me to listen more than I spoke, and the less said, the better. They told me not to be too direct with others as they wouldn't like it. I'd been living by these satanic philosophies and was very rarely open and honest with other people. Even with my best friend I very rarely opened up to point out their faults, afraid of displeasing them and ruining their image of me. Instead, I preferred to go along with what they felt and flatter them, but it was all a lie, all a sham! I realized that living by these satanic philosophies for life could only make me incredibly false, cunning, selfish and vile. I thought only of my own interests and didn't think of others at all. I wasn't sincere with people and had no love for them. Someone like me couldn't help or benefit anyone in any way at all, and simply wasn't worth becoming close to. I saw that these satanic philosophies were truly absurd and that they should never be principles of conduct. I saw that living by these satanic philosophies for life can only make us more corrupt, and more lacking in humanity. I thought about how every time I'd noticed a problem and didn't say anything, I felt guilty later on, and like there was a stone in my heart I couldn't get rid of. I felt like I knew the truth but couldn't put it into practice. I'd been such a coward, without any dignity or integrity. At my age, I still couldn't be a decent person, and didn't know the principles for human interactions. Instead, I was following the philosophies for living taught and propagated by Satan. I really hated myself at that moment. I didn't want to live by these satanic philosophies any longer. I just wanted to act and conduct myself in line with God's words.

I then read these words of God: **“What is the most important practice of being an honest person? It is that your heart must be open to God. What do I mean by ‘open’? It means giving God a crystal clear view of everything you think, what your intentions are, and what controls you. What you say is what is in your heart, without the slightest bit of difference and keeping nothing concealed, speaking without a dark side, without making others have to make guesses or delve deeper by asking questions, and without your needing to beat around the bush; rather, you just say what you think, without any other intent. This means your heart is open. Sometimes your straightforwardness may hurt others and displease them. However, would anyone say, ‘You’re speaking in such an honest way and you’ve really hurt me; I can’t accept your honesty’? No; no one would. Even if you occasionally hurt people, if you can open up to them and make apology, admit that you spoke without wisdom and gave no regard to their weaknesses, they will see you have no hard feelings, that you are an honest person, and that you simply do not pay much attention to the way you speak and are just very straightforward; no one will hold this against you. ... The most important part of being an honest person is that your heart must be open to God. Afterward, you can learn to be open to other people, to speak honestly and truly, to say what is in your heart, to be a person with dignity, integrity, and character, and to not speak bombastically or falsely or use words to disguise yourself or deceive others”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only by Being Honest Can One Live Out a True Human Likeness). As I pondered God’s words, I was incredibly moved. I felt God had taken me by the hand to teach me how to conduct myself as a human being. To be an honest person, to speak and act with honesty, to completely open my heart up to God, to be open with

brothers and sisters, and not to use tactics or play tricks—living this way isn't tiring. I raised that sister's issue with her later and fellowshipped with her about the dangers of getting wrapped up in online novels. At first, she did look pretty unhappy, and it was a bit awkward. But by opening up and fellowshipping with her, she came to realize that she was in a dangerous state. She said that she wouldn't read online novels anymore and would keep her mind on her duty. Hearing her say this, I could finally breathe a sigh of relief, but I also reproached myself. If I'd spoken up sooner then perhaps her state would have been rectified sooner. It was just because I always wanted to be agreeable that I'd given in to myself and not practiced the truth, and things had dragged on. Being a yes-man is really harmful. After that, when I saw an issue in the duties of the brothers and sisters, sometimes I'd still worry about offending them, but by praying to God, mindfully practicing the truth and being an honest person, I was always able to point out the problem truthfully later on. Only by the guidance of God's words was I able to learn how to conduct myself and interact with brothers and sisters. I perceived just how precious God's words are. They are the principles for our conduct and actions. Whether in our duty or our conduct, we always need God's words to guide us. As long as we seek the truth when an issue crops up, then we'll have a path to follow.

Thinking back, I used to agree in theory that I was deceitful, but I never compared myself against God's words in earnest to examine and dissect my corrupt disposition. I also rarely searched for a path of practice or principles from God's words, so my deceitful disposition did not change at all. Although I've experienced just some trifling matters in life, when I focus on examining myself and seeking the truth in God's words, I reap a harvest and come to some understanding. I also feel real inner peace and gain a little of the path to life entry. Coming to this understanding and

reaping this harvest is entirely down to the guidance of God's words!
Thanks be to God!

46. Can People Pleasers Win God's Praise?

By Liu Yi, China

Before I was a believer, I was always careful not to offend other people, and I could get along with everyone. I'd help out whenever I saw someone going through a hard time, so I felt like I had good humanity, and that I was a good person. It was only by experiencing the judgment and chastisement of God's words that I realized that I was just safeguarding my relationships with others and I was devoid of a sense of justice. I was never able to uphold the principles of the truth or to protect the interests of God's house when it was most critical. I saw I was a selfish, deceitful people pleaser who disgusted God. Filled with regret and detesting myself, I began to focus on practicing the truth, and I then began to change.

I used to work with Sister Li when I was the head of the church's watering team. After a while I noticed that she wasn't bearing any burden in her duty and wasn't diligent in anything she did. She hardly ever helped brothers and sisters resolve their problems and sometimes she'd even mix up the times for gatherings. I wanted to bring these things to her attention, but then I thought about how she hadn't been doing that duty for very long, so if I did say something, she might think I was too demanding and strict. She had a really good impression of me, so would she change her opinion of me if I mentioned these things? I decided to fellowship with her in private so that she would not lose face. During our fellowship, I didn't communicate the truth to resolve the problems she had, but instead advised her tactfully, "You haven't been very effective in your duty recently. Have you reflected on this? If you are living in a wrong state that isn't taken care of, then not only will you not do your duty well, but it can also get in the way of your life entry." In fact, I knew that she was careless and inattentive

in her duty and I should fellowship on the truth with her to dissect the nature of the problem, that I should deal with and expose her so that she could gain understanding of her issues. But if I was too heavy-handed and she couldn't accept it, I was worried it would ruin our relationship and she might resent me. So, I just patiently fellowshipped with her.

I later saw that Sister Li was really competitive in her duty and was always trying to outdo others. She would sink into negativity when she couldn't gain people's admiration. I shared one-on-one fellowship with her quite a few times and she appeared to take it really well, but nothing ever changed. I thought about reporting the situation to the leaders, but I was afraid that would be stabbing Sister Li in the back. How could we get along after that if I offended her? We'd known each other all that time, and I felt that there are advantages to knowing each other well. I figured I'd keep trying to help her, and if she kept on that way, I'd still have time to talk to the leaders.

Sister Li's performance in her duty continued to slip and she was unable to resolve brothers' and sisters' problems. One time, when trying to resolve new believers' problems in a gathering, she shared fellowship that was off base. We set it straight together, but then later on she shared that same wrong fellowship when she ran into the same kind of problem. Not only did she fail to resolve new believers' issues, but even misled them. I really blamed myself when I found out about it and I wanted to expose Sister Li as doing her duty in a disruptive way, but I found myself tongue-tied the moment I saw her. I just glossed over it, saying she had fellowshipped incorrectly with brothers and sisters. I was vague and beat around the bush, afraid of upsetting her and making her think badly of me if I was too hard on her. As a result, she didn't gain any understanding of herself. I saw that she didn't have a good understanding of things and

wasn't well-suited to watering duty, so according to the principles she should have been switched to another duty and I should have reported it to the leaders as soon as possible. But I changed my mind, afraid I'd offend her and after all that time of working together, we'd become enemies instead of friends. In the end, I didn't uphold the principles of the truth, and I delayed reporting her to the leaders. I ended up in a terrible state myself because I wasn't putting the truth into practice and I became blind to the problems in my work. I got used to Sister Li's performance and was content as long as we got along well superficially. I wasn't thinking about upholding the work of God's house, and I didn't tell the leaders about what was really going on.

Then one day, Sister Li found out she was being watched by Chinese Communist Party police informers, and if she kept doing her duty, then she could implicate other brothers and sisters. My heart raced when I heard this news. Knowing this was a really serious issue, I finally shared her situation with the leaders. The leaders wrote me a very stern response: "Sister Li is careless in her duty and her understanding is misguided. This has long been disruptive, but you didn't report on this for a long time. You were just taking the middle road, and following the principles of being a people pleaser. This has delayed and damaged the work of God's house. You really need to reflect on and know yourself." They also included an excerpt from a sermon from the Above: "People pleasers fail to use their discernment. They know the principles of the truth well, but they do not uphold them. In anything that impacts their personal interests, they even cast aside the principles of the truth, only safeguarding their own personal gain. When a people pleaser sees an evil person doing evil deeds, they know that these deeds disrupt the work of God's house and disturb the life of the church, but they do not say a word, afraid of offending them. They do not expose or

report them. They completely lack any sense of justice or responsibility. People like this are not suited to carry out any duty in the church—they are good-for-nothings. People pleasers appear to be honest and others think they are good people of good humanity, and some leaders and workers even cultivate them. This is utterly foolish. Never try to cultivate a people pleaser, as they cannot accomplish anything. Essentially, they do not love the truth or accept the truth, to say nothing of putting the truth into practice. This is why God hates people pleasers above all. If such people do not truly repent, they will be eliminated” (Work Arrangements). Being so harshly pruned and dealt with by the leaders was gutting for me, particularly when I saw the words “people pleaser.” I couldn’t hold back my tears: How could I be a people pleaser? God detests people pleasers. They are good-for-nothings, and will be eliminated. I was incredibly upset and couldn’t bear to acknowledge the fact that I was a people pleaser, even though I really had done just what people pleasers do. Through my tears, I said this prayer to God: “Oh God, I’ve disrupted the work of God’s house by not practicing the truth. I’ve done evil, and the leaders were right to deal with me. But I still don’t have a deep understanding of myself. Please enlighten me and guide me to know myself.”

After praying, I read this in God’s words: **“Some people always boast that they possess good humanity, claiming never to have done anything bad, stolen others’ possessions, or coveted other people’s things. They even go so far as to allow others to benefit at their own expense when there is a dispute over interests, preferring to suffer loss, and they never say anything bad about anyone just so that everyone else thinks they are good people. However, when performing their duties in God’s house, they are wily and slippery, always scheming for themselves. Never do they think of the interests of God’s house, never do they treat**

as urgent the things God treats as urgent or think as God thinks, and never can they set aside their own interests so as to perform their duties. They never forsake their own interests. Even when they see evildoers committing evil, they do not expose them; they have no principles whatsoever. This is not an example of good humanity. Pay no attention to what such a person says; you must see what he lives out, what he reveals, and what his attitude is when he performs his duties, as well as what his internal state is and what he loves. If his love of his own fame and fortune exceeds his loyalty to God, if his love of his own fame and fortune exceeds God's interests, or if his love of his own fame and fortune exceeds the consideration he shows for God, then he is not a person with humanity" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Give Your True Heart to God, and You Can Obtain the Truth). **"Many people believe that being a good person is actually easy, and simply requires speaking less and doing more, having a good heart, and not having any ill intent. They believe that this will ensure that they will prosper wherever they go, that people will like them, and that it is good enough just to be such a person. They even go so far as to not want to pursue the truth; they are satisfied just to be good people. They think that the issue of pursuing the truth and serving God is just too complicated; it requires understanding many truths, they think, and who can accomplish that? They just want to take an easier path—being good people and performing their duties—and think that that will be enough. Is this position tenable? Is being a good person really so simple? You will find plenty of good people in society speaking in a very lofty manner, and even though they outwardly seem not to have done any great evil, deep down they are deceitful and slippery. In particular, they are able to see which way the wind blows, and they are smooth and worldly in their**

eloquence. As I see it, such a ‘good person’ is a false one, a hypocrite; such a person is merely pretending to be good. All those who stick to a happy medium are the most sinister. They try not to offend anyone, they are people-pleasers, they go along with things, and no one can figure them out. A person like that is a living Satan!” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only by Putting the Truth Into Practice Can One Cast off the Shackles of a Corrupt Disposition). Everything in God’s words hit the nail on the head for me, and I was utterly convinced. I saw that I was a people pleaser, a “nice guy” through and through. I walked on eggshells in my work with Sister Li in order to protect our relationship. When I saw she wasn’t bearing a burden in her duty and was constantly making mistakes, that she was always vying for name and gain and impacting the work of God’s house, I should have fellowshiped with her and pointed this out right away. But afraid of offending her, I just glossed over the issue with her. This wasn’t helpful or loving toward her—it was harmful. I knew her understanding was off and she wasn’t fit for doing watering duty, but I didn’t want to hurt her feelings and make her think ill of me, so I delayed reporting this to the leaders. I enabled a careless person with a skewed, faulty understanding to perform watering duty and hinder the work of God’s house. I had become one of Satan’s minions and seriously disrupted the work of God’s house. In my faith, on the surface I left my family and career behind, worked day and night and paid a price, but when issues arose, I just schemed for my own interests and didn’t safeguard the interests of God’s house at all. I believed in God, but I wasn’t of one heart and mind with Him. How could I call myself a believer? I wasn’t worthy of living before God! I was wracked with misery at this thought and filled with regret that I hadn’t been upholding the principles of the truth or protecting the interests of God’s house.

I later read this in God's words: "Satan corrupts people through the education and influence of national governments and of the famous and great. Their devilish words have become man's life nature. 'Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost' is a well-known satanic saying that has been instilled into everyone, and that has become man's life. There are other words of philosophies for living that are also like this. Satan uses each nation's fine traditional culture to educate people, causing mankind to fall into and be engulfed by a boundless abyss of destruction, and in the end people are destroyed by God because they serve Satan and resist God. Imagine asking someone who has been active in society for decades the following question: 'Given that you have lived in the world for so long and achieved so much, what are the main famous sayings that you live by?' He might say, 'The most important one is, "Officials do not make things difficult for those who bear gifts, and those who do not flatter accomplish nothing.'" Are these words not representative of that person's nature? Unscrupulously using any means to obtain position has become his nature, and being an official is what gives him life. There are still many satanic poisons in people's lives, in their conduct and behavior; they possess almost no truth at all. For example, their philosophies for living, their ways of doing things, and their maxims are all filled with the poisons of the great red dragon, and they all come from Satan. Thus, all things that flow through people's bones and blood are all things of Satan. All of those officials, those who hold power, and those who are accomplished have their own paths and secrets to success. Are such secrets not perfectly representative of their nature? They have done such big things in the world, and no one can see through the schemes and intrigues that lay behind them. This shows just how insidious and

venomous their nature is. Mankind has been profoundly corrupted by Satan. Satan's venom flows through the blood of every person, and it can be seen that man's nature is corrupt, evil, and reactionary, filled by and immersed in the philosophies of Satan—it is, in its entirety, a nature that betrays God. This is why people resist God and stand in opposition to God” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. How to Know Man's Nature).

What God's words revealed showed me that, as a people pleaser, I had been misled and controlled by philosophies of Satan, like “Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost,” “One more friend means one more path,” “A familiar face brings benefits,” “When you know something is wrong, it is better to say less,” and “Never hit people below the belt.” These satanic philosophies were deeply entrenched in me, and I lived by these things. I was becoming increasingly selfish and cunning. Back before I believed in God, I never did anything to displease anyone. In business, I said whatever people wanted to hear and felt that going by those satanic philosophies was a clever way to live, that to conduct myself that way showed capability, and I even showed off. After becoming a believer, I didn't put the truth into practice, but kept living by these poisons of Satan. I saw Sister Li was showing corruption in her duty, but I didn't point this out to her in fellowship. I particularly didn't dare to expose or dissect her corruption, but just casually mentioned it to her, terribly afraid of damaging our relationship if I told the truth. When I saw her disrupting the work of God's house, I didn't report this to our leaders, but thought that sharing the situation with the leaders would be telling on her, stabbing her in the back. How absurd of me! Reporting a problem is upholding the work of God's house—it is right and proper, and it is just. It also would have given the church a chance to arrange for Sister Li to take on a duty appropriate to her caliber and stature. This would have been beneficial for both Sister Li and

the church, but I thought it was a bad thing. I realized what great harm these satanic poisons do to people. They had deceived and corrupted me to the point that my perspective on things was twisted and I didn't know right from wrong, up from down. I was selfish and despicable, and only worked for my own interests. I did things entirely without principle, without a stance. I lacked a sense of justice and wasn't remotely living out the likeness of a true human being. Realizing this filled me with disgust and loathing for these satanic philosophies and my own people-pleasing ideas. I really hated the way I had acted and didn't want to be that way anymore, from the bottom of my heart. I didn't want to be played for a fool and harmed by Satan anymore. I also felt how precious it is to practice the truth, and so I immediately began seeking the truth to resolve my problem of being a people pleaser.

I read this in God's words in my seeking: **"There must be a standard for having good humanity. It does not involve taking the path of moderation, not sticking to principles, endeavoring not to offend anyone, currying favor everywhere you go, being smooth and slick with everyone you meet, and making everyone feel good. This is not the standard. So what is the standard? It includes treating God, other people, and events with a true heart, being able to take responsibility, and doing all this in a way that is evident for everyone to see and feel. Moreover, God searches people's hearts and knows them, each and every one"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Give Your True Heart to God, and You Can Obtain the Truth). **"Is someone who is a natural yes-man a genuinely good person? What kind of person is seen by God to be a genuinely good person who possesses the truth? First and foremost, one must understand God's will and understand the truth. Secondly, one must be able to put the truth into practice, based on one's**

understanding of it. ... That is, the moment this person discovers they have a problem, they are able to come before God to resolve it, and are able to maintain a normal relationship with Him. Such a person may be weak and corrupt, as well as rebellious, and may reveal all manner of corrupt dispositions such as arrogance, self-righteousness, crookedness, and deceitfulness. However, once they have self-reflected and become aware of these things, they can resolve them in a timely manner and make a turnaround. This is one who loves the truth and who practices the truth; such a person, in God's eyes, is a good person" (The Word, Vol. 3.

The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Having a Human Likeness Requires Fulfilling Your Duty Properly With All Your Heart, Mind, and Soul). I then thought of another passage of Almighty God's words: **"In the church, stand firm in your testimony to Me, uphold the truth; right is right and wrong is wrong. Do not confuse black and white. You shall be at war with Satan and must completely vanquish it so that it never rises again. You must give everything you have to protect My testimony. This shall be the goal of your actions—do not forget this"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 41). Through God's words, I came to understand that a truly good person doesn't maintain perfect harmony with others and say nothing to offend anyone. Instead, a good person is honest and upright, clearly distinguishes love from hate, and can set aside their own personal interests when the interests of God's house are involved. They uphold the principles of the truth, they aren't afraid of offending other people, and they safeguard the interests of God's house. Only that kind of person is someone with a sense of justice, someone who can win God's praise. Once I'd understood God's requirements, I said a prayer and resolved that from then on, I would practice the truth and protect the interests of God's house; I would say goodbye to the old people pleaser in me, and make myself anew.

The leaders later looked into the issue and confirmed that Sister Li needed to be removed from her duty, and they asked me to go fellowship with her. I thought, “Why me? If she finds out that I was the one to tell the leaders about her and that’s why she’s being replaced, she’ll definitely resent me and that will ruin our relationship.” At this thought, I remembered the damage I’d done to the work of God’s house by failing to practice the truth and I knew I had to stop being a people pleaser. Having me share fellowship with Sister Li was God testing me, to see if I could practice the truth and handle matters in accordance with the principles. I kept praying to God the whole way there, asking for His guidance. I was also aware that if I didn’t clearly fellowship with Sister Li on her issues and she didn’t come to understand them, then this wouldn’t be helping her at all, but hurting her. At this thought, I became determined to never be a people pleaser again. And so, I fellowshipped with Sister Li and dissected the nature and consequences of her carelessness in her duty, and I laid bare all of her behavior that had disrupted the work of God’s house. When she heard all this, she was willing to submit and reflect on herself. I felt so much better and at peace after practicing the truth.

God set up another situation to test me after that. After getting to know a younger sister for a little while, I realized she had an arrogant disposition and was reluctant to accept the other sisters’ suggestions, which led to a number of them feeling constrained by her. I and Sister Liu, another sister who worked with me, went to share fellowship with her and expose the way she’d been acting, but she wouldn’t accept it. She even argued her own case and pulled a long face. I felt a little held back by this, thinking that she had to have a poor opinion of me. How could I face her after that? Something else happened to come up right then, so we had to leave. On the way back, I was thinking about how this younger sister was somewhat willful and that

she found it hard to accept the truth. Without proper fellowship, our relationship would definitely become strained. I figured next time I'd have my partner share fellowship with her. I saw her again a couple of days later and she was perfectly amicable toward me. I realized that we hadn't really sorted out her problem through fellowship last time, so I'd need to fellowship with her again, and if she still refused to accept the truth, she'd have to be exposed and dealt with. But when she got a chair for me and asked after my health, I felt like my mouth had been zipped shut. I wanted to say something in fellowship, but I just couldn't open my mouth. I felt that the moment I opened up in fellowship, it would just ruin our relationship and destroy that friendly atmosphere. If she had the same attitude as before and wouldn't accept the truth, I'd be in a really awkward position. I figured I could choose my words wisely, avoid being harsh, and employ a bit of wisdom. Just then, I realized I had the urge to be a people pleaser again and protect my interpersonal relationships. I quickly prayed to God and asked Him for strength. I thought of this passage of Almighty God's words after my prayer: **"Your satanic, corrupt disposition is controlling you; you are not even the master of your own mouth. Even if you want to give voice to honest words, you are both unable and afraid to say them. You are not able to commit even one ten-thousandth of the things you should do, the things you should say, and the responsibility you should take; your hands and feet are bound by your satanic, corrupt disposition. You are not in charge at all. Your satanic, corrupt disposition tells you how to speak, and so you speak that way; it tells you what to do, and so you do it. ... You do not seek the truth, much less do you practice the truth, yet you keep on praying, building up your determination, making resolutions, and swearing oaths. And what has come from all of this? You are still a yes-man: 'I won't**

provoke anyone, nor will I offend anyone. If a matter is none of my concern, then I'll stay away from it; I won't say anything about things that have nothing to do with me, and this goes without exception. If anything is injurious to my own interests, my pride, or my self-regard, I still will pay none of it any heed, and will approach all of it cautiously; I mustn't act rashly. The nail that sticks up gets hit first, and I'm not that stupid!' You are totally under the control of your corrupt dispositions of wickedness, cunning, hardness, and detesting the truth. They are running you into the ground, and have grown harder for you to bear even than the Golden Hoop the Monkey King wore. Living under the control of a corrupt disposition is so exhausting and excruciating! Tell Me, if you do not pursue the truth, is it easy to cast off your corruption? Can this problem be resolved? I tell you, if you do not pursue the truth and are muddled in your belief, listening to however many years of sermons will be of no use, and if you persist in this way to the very end, then, at best, you will be a religious fraud and a Pharisee, and that will be the end of that. If you are even worse than this, then there may come an event wherein you fall into temptation, and you will lose your duty and betray God. You will have fallen. You will be always on the edge of a precipice! Right now, nothing is more important than pursuing the truth. It is useless to pursue anything else"

(The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only Those Who Practice the Truth Are God-Fearing). God's words totally laid bare the truth of me being a people pleaser. When I saw that young sister was somewhat willful and found it hard to accept the truth, I didn't want to fan the flames or fall on my face, but just wanted to tiptoe around the problem. I even wanted to have someone else fellowship with her just to protect my relationship with her. I was still being a people pleaser! I thought about the damage I'd done to the

work of God's house before because I hadn't practiced the truth. I'd missed my chance to practice the truth that time, and this time I knew I couldn't be left with regrets. Before I knew it, I felt a surge of strength: Practicing the truth was paramount, and I couldn't fall short again. I mustered up my courage and fellowshiped with this sister, exposing what she'd been doing and the nature of her actions. She heard me out and accepted it, and was willing to repent. I felt an indescribable joy in my heart. I'd finally been able to practice some truth, and I felt a sense of peace and joy in my spirit. That felt like an upright way to live, like I had a human likeness.

Thinking back over the many small things that God did to work in me, I can see that God's judgment and chastisement truly were exactly what was needed to change my corrupt disposition. If He hadn't set up situation after situation to expose me, and if it hadn't been for the judgment and revelations of His words, I never would have known what kind of person I actually was. I never would have known the pathetic truth of how I had been living by Satan's poisons. I came to appreciate how practical God's salvation and transformation of mankind are, and how hard-won they are! My ability to practice some truth and live out some human likeness today is all thanks to God's judgment and chastisement. I'm so grateful for God's salvation for me!

47. Can People Pleasers Gain God's Salvation?

By Hao Zheng, China

I'm from a poor, backward mountain village with feudalistic customs and complicated interpersonal relationships. I was really influenced by that environment and things my parents would say, like "Think before you speak and then talk with reservation," "Silence is gold, speech is silver, and he who talks a lot errs a lot," "Keeping silent on the faults of good friends makes for a long and good friendship," "Speak good words in harmony with others' feelings and reason, as being frank annoys others." All these philosophies became words of wisdom for me in my life. Even with my siblings, I was always carefully observing them, trying to say nice, complimentary things to make them happy. If one did something wrong and my parents asked me who it was, I'd always say I didn't know, so my siblings liked me quite a bit. My mom always said I was a good kid, too. Once I got out into the world, whether I was with friends or with all the different types of people out there, I was always walking on eggshells to protect my relationships. I never did anything that would offend anyone or argued with anyone. If someone else offended me, I was really forgiving and wouldn't rock the boat. I got the short end of the stick a lot, and I felt pent up and angry, but I'd stick to "Silence is gold, and he who talks a lot errs a lot" and just stuff my feelings. I became known among family and friends for being a nice person. I was complimented and praised by everyone for being that way, but I always felt this pressure and pain in my heart that I couldn't put words to. I was on guard with everyone so I wouldn't offend anyone, and I'd never dared to really open up to a single person. I was always pandering and putting up a false front to protect my own interests. That was a painful, tiring, and distressing way to live. I used

to always wonder, “When will my suffering end? How can I lead an easier life?” When I was lost and in pain, Almighty God stretched out His hand of salvation to me.

In 1998, I had the good fortune to accept Almighty God’s work of the last days. I learned from Almighty God’s words that God has become flesh and come to save mankind mainly to resolve our corrupt dispositions and allow us to live out a true human likeness. Almighty God says, **“You ought to know that God likes those who are honest. In essence, God is faithful, and so His words can always be trusted; His actions, furthermore, are faultless and unquestionable, which is why God likes those who are absolutely honest with Him”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Three Admonitions). **“My kingdom requires those who are honest, those who are not hypocritical or deceitful. Are not the sincere and honest people unpopular in the world? I am just the opposite. It is acceptable for the honest people to come to Me; I delight in this kind of person, and I also need this kind of person. This is precisely My righteousness”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 33). God tells us to be honest, simple, and open, that that’s the only way to get into the kingdom of heaven. When I read this, I deeply felt that that was an easier, happier way to live and I aspired to be honest as God requires. In interactions and gatherings with brothers and sisters, I noticed they were all honest and spoke freely. They were sincere and genuine. When they had opinions about someone or saw someone revealing corruption, they could point it out to help them, and they could open up and talk about their knowledge of themselves. This was really surprising for me, because I had always thought one’s opinions about people absolutely couldn’t be talked about, that by being honest, I’d offend others and harm myself. But I didn’t need to worry about that here. Brothers and sisters

weren't as phony as people in the world, and they'd apologize when they hurt someone else. They always considered others. I knew they could practice that and live it out entirely because of Almighty God's work and words. That made me even more certain that Almighty God's words are the truth, that they can cleanse and change people, and I really wanted to be an honest person. But Satan's philosophies for living had burrowed into me long before, becoming my own rules for survival. In my interactions with brothers and sisters, without realizing it, I was still relying on those satanic philosophies. I was afraid to open up and speak from the heart, afraid of offending someone or damaging my reputation. I kept on being careful to protect my relationships with them and I felt that being honest was a really tall order. Then to cleanse and change me, God carefully arranged the right environment to reveal my corruption and deficiencies, leading me into the reality of being an honest person.

Later, I started working as a team leader with Brother Li. We got along great and he helped me out with a lot of things. But in our duty, I found out that he was arrogant, self-willed, and didn't go by the principles. Every time I wanted to say something, I'd be about to open my mouth, then end up just swallowing the words. I thought, "If I criticize him, he'll say I don't have a conscience, that he's been so kind to me but I'm always pointing out his problems. What if he becomes biased against me, and we can't work together in our duty anymore?" I never did bring this up with him so that I could protect our relationship. Brother Li later seriously impacted the church's work because he was arrogant and neglected his duties, and he was replaced. In spite of this, I still didn't reflect on myself. But then one day when I went to Brother Li's house for something, his wife said to me, "You have a hand in my husband getting replaced. If you'd been able to warn him and help him, it's possible he wouldn't have acted so willfully and

recklessly in his duty and disrupted the church's work. Why can't you uphold the church's work? You're a people pleaser, you don't practice the truth!" Hearing her say this was devastating for me, and I felt ashamed more than anything. After leaving, I just couldn't stop the tears. I prayed to God in my pain, saying, "Oh God, You allowed this sister to deal with me and reprimand me today, but I don't truly know myself. Please enlighten and guide me." I gradually calmed down after my prayer and started to think back on my time working with Brother Li. I saw I'd been living by Satan's philosophies for living. I'd clearly seen him going against principles but I didn't stop him or help him. I was so afraid of offending him and damaging our working relationship. I had a responsibility I couldn't escape in Brother Li getting to that point. I felt more and more guilty and regretful.

Later, I read a passage of God's words. **"There must be a standard for having good humanity. It does not involve taking the path of moderation, not sticking to principles, endeavoring not to offend anyone, currying favor everywhere you go, being smooth and slick with everyone you meet, and making everyone feel good. This is not the standard. So what is the standard? It includes treating God, other people, and events with a true heart, being able to take responsibility, and doing all this in a way that is evident for everyone to see and feel. Moreover, God searches people's hearts and knows them, each and every one. Some people always boast that they possess good humanity, claiming never to have done anything bad, stolen others' possessions, or coveted other people's things. They even go so far as to allow others to benefit at their own expense when there is a dispute over interests, preferring to suffer loss, and they never say anything bad about anyone just so that everyone else thinks they are good people. However, when performing their duties in God's house, they are wily and slippery,**

always scheming for themselves. Never do they think of the interests of God's house, never do they treat as urgent the things God treats as urgent or think as God thinks, and never can they set aside their own interests so as to perform their duties. They never forsake their own interests. Even when they see evildoers committing evil, they do not expose them; they have no principles whatsoever. This is not an example of good humanity. Pay no attention to what such a person says; you must see what he lives out, what he reveals, and what his attitude is when he performs his duties, as well as what his internal state is and what he loves. If his love of his own fame and fortune exceeds his loyalty to God, if his love of his own fame and fortune exceeds God's interests, or if his love of his own fame and fortune exceeds the consideration he shows for God, then he is not a person with humanity. His behavior can be seen by others and by God; therefore, it is very difficult for such a person to gain the truth" (The

Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Give Your True Heart to God, and You Can Obtain the Truth). God's words showed me that being a good person isn't acting nice. It's not getting along with people or winning their approval. It's turning your heart to God, being loyal, practicing the truth to uphold the work of God's house, following the principles of the truth, and helping and supporting people spiritually in their lives. But even though I'd seen Brother Li be willful and go against the truth many times, and be very arrogant and not accept other people's suggestions, knowing this was bad both for him and the work of God's house, I still went by the satanic philosophy of "Keeping silent on the faults of good friends makes for a long and good friendship." I turned a blind eye. I didn't help him or mention it to a church leader. I just looked on as the church's work was harmed. I just couldn't sacrifice my prestige to practice the truth and be responsible. I was

so selfish, despicable, and deceitful! Wasn't I enabling his sin? Wasn't I standing on Satan's side? I became a despicable, self-interested person out of my fear of offending anyone. I had no sense of righteousness. I wasn't a good person at all. In my pursuit to be a nice guy, I'd become the people pleaser and deceitful person that God despises. Out in the world, it would be fine to be like that, but in God's house, that disgusts Him. Then I realized that not practicing the truth, but being nice to protect relationships actually does harm to people. For the first time ever, my view on being a good person was shaken. I saw that going by satanic philosophies in my relationships was totally wrong, and being dealt with this time left a deep impression on me that I'll never forget. I felt like Brother Li had committed a transgression, but what I was left with was an eternal debt. Through God's judgment and chastisement, I gained understanding of my misguided pursuit over the years and I didn't want to live that way anymore. I became willing to be an honest, upright person as God requires. I had the desire to work to be an honest person, but since my corruption and satanic disposition ran so deep and I didn't fully understand and hate my nature and essence as a people pleaser, I didn't truly change. Before long, I was back to doing the same old things.

The husband of Sister Zhang from a nearby village was a thoroughly evil local thug who stood in the way of her faith. Whenever he saw her leaving for a gathering, he'd start trouble with other brothers and sisters so they couldn't find any peace. One time when she was gone for a gathering, her husband took the wood a brother was going to use to build a house and set it all on fire. The church leader told her, "Don't come to gatherings—we have to keep everyone safe. Do your devotionals and read God's words yourself at home." But after a while, she really wanted to attend a gathering and she couldn't stop herself from coming to our village to meet with Sister

Wang. Not knowing what to do, Sister Wang came to talk to me. I knew very well that the church's interests had to come first, that Sister Zhang should go home. But then I thought, "I'm not a church leader. What will the others think if this is the wrong move? Besides, if Sister Zhang found out I stopped her from having a gathering, what would she think of me?" At this thought, I politely skirted around it, saying, "You should really talk to a church leader about this. Go find one of them." She wasn't able to find one in the end, so she let Sister Zhang stay.

The next evening while I was at home doing my devotionals and listening to hymns of God's words, I suddenly heard someone violently pounding on the door. The moment my son opened the door, three or four big guys with wooden clubs burst in and then four or five more jumped down off my roof. They pinned me down on the bed without a word and gave me a vicious beating. I was really scared. I prayed and called out to God nonstop. Just when the pain was getting really bad, the bed frame snapped and I fell down onto the floor. Those bullies thought I'd been seriously hurt and fled in a panic. I thought after a beating like that I'd definitely have some broken bones, but surprisingly, they were just flesh wounds with no injury to the bones. I knew that was God's care and protection. A day later I found out that Sister Zhang's husband knew she was leaving for a gathering and thought I'd arranged it, so he got those guys to beat me up. I realized that happened because I hadn't followed the principles. If I had, and I'd stopped Sister Zhang from attending that gathering, it never would have come to that. Getting beaten up by those thugs was entirely because I was selfish and despicable. I only cared about my own interests and was a "nice guy" who wouldn't practice the truth. I'd brought it upon myself.

I later came before God in seeking and reflection: Why couldn't I stop protecting my own interests and being a people pleaser? Why couldn't I put it into practice when I knew the truth? One time, I read these words from God: **"Satan corrupts people through the education and influence of national governments and of the famous and great. Their devilish words have become man's life nature. 'Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost' is a well-known satanic saying that has been instilled into everyone, and that has become man's life. There are other words of philosophies for living that are also like this. Satan uses each nation's fine traditional culture to educate people, causing mankind to fall into and be engulfed by a boundless abyss of destruction, and in the end people are destroyed by God because they serve Satan and resist God. ... There are still many satanic poisons in people's lives, in their conduct and behavior; they possess almost no truth at all. For example, their philosophies for living, their ways of doing things, and their maxims are all filled with the poisons of the great red dragon, and they all come from Satan. Thus, all things that flow through people's bones and blood are all things of Satan. All of those officials, those who hold power, and those who are accomplished have their own paths and secrets to success. Are such secrets not perfectly representative of their nature? They have done such big things in the world, and no one can see through the schemes and intrigues that lay behind them. This shows just how insidious and venomous their nature is. Mankind has been profoundly corrupted by Satan. Satan's venom flows through the blood of every person, and it can be seen that man's nature is corrupt, evil, and reactionary, filled by and immersed in the philosophies of Satan—it is, in its entirety, a nature that betrays God. This is why people resist God and stand in opposition to God"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of

the Last Days. How to Know Man's Nature). I found the root of the problem as I thought this over. I was always a people pleaser who couldn't practice the truth because I was filled with Satan's philosophies and poisons: "Silence is gold, speech is silver, and he who talks a lot errs a lot," "When you know something is wrong, it is better to say less," "Sensible people are good at self-protection, seeking only to avoid making mistakes," "Think before you speak and then talk with reservation," "Keeping silent on the faults of good friends makes for a long and good friendship." I took these as words to live by, as my rules of conduct and I did everything I could to be a nice guy based on these things. In all of my interactions, all I ever thought about was not offending people, how to get people to praise and look up to me. I'd perfected Satan's slippery and deceitful philosophies and they became things I naturally revealed. Even though I seemed like a good person in the world and people praised me as a nice guy, I was a far cry from a truly good person. What was I even gaining from living according to these poisons of Satan? I lost the innocence a child should have when I was little and I put up a false front with absolutely everyone. I was very careful and always observed others when I spoke and acted. I was on my guard with everyone. I never opened up and spoke from the heart with anyone. I was even deceitful with my own family. I went against my own conscience a lot and sold out my own dignity and integrity, because I was afraid of offending others. I never dared to stand up for what was just and I compromised my integrity just to protect my image. I forced a smile even when I was angry. Not only did these satanic philosophies keep me from living out normal humanity, but I was selfish, despicable, deceitful, and didn't know good from evil. Living by these satanic philosophies did gain me praise from others in the moment, but it was like being held in invisible shackles, very tightly bound. I couldn't speak or act freely. I had no freedom whatsoever,

and I was really depressed and in pain. Now I could see that being the people pleaser I used to strive for wasn't actually being a good person, but was being a crafty, black-hearted person who didn't pursue the truth. I was opposing and betraying God. I never could be saved without God's judgment and cleansing. Then I realized that God had allowed those thugs to beat me up. He was giving me a warning so I would come before God and reflect on myself, know the essence and consequences of being a people pleaser, and repent.

Through reading God's words, I saw the nature and essence of being a people pleaser as well as its dangers and consequences. I prayed to God, willing to really pursue the truth, be freed of the bonds of Satan's philosophies, and be honest according to God's words. One time I found out that Sister Lin had been transferred to another church and selected as a deacon. I knew she was a really deceitful person and she'd always been really wily in her duty in the church before, saying one thing and doing another. I knew that someone so deceitful shouldn't be a church deacon and I should uphold the church's work. I decided to write a letter to that church's leader explaining the situation. But I hesitated just as I was picking up the pen, thinking, "This is a matter for their church. Will their leader say I'm overreaching, not minding my own business?" Then I thought of some of God's words. **"All of you say you are considerate of God's burden and will defend the testimony of the church, but who among you has really been considerate of God's burden? Ask yourself: Are you someone who has shown consideration for His burden? Can you practice righteousness for Him? Can you stand up and speak for Me? Can you steadfastly put the truth into practice? Are you bold enough to fight against all of Satan's deeds? Would you be able to set your emotions aside and expose Satan for the sake of My truth? Can you**

allow My intentions to be fulfilled in you? Have you offered up your heart in the most crucial of moments? Are you someone who does My will?” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 13). Every one of God’s words spoke to my heart and I could feel God’s urgent will, hoping people practice the truth and uphold righteousness, dare to say “no” to Satan’s forces and take responsibility to uphold God’s work. He doesn’t want us to calculate our gains and losses, but to prioritize the church’s interests. Once I understood God’s will, I found the confidence to put the truth into practice, so I wrote that letter to the leader of the other church about Sister Lin. A few days later, the leader told me that they had looked into it and confirmed Sister Lin was a deceitful person, so they’d changed her duty. Seeing it turn out that way was comforting and left me at ease. I saw being honest is wonderful and I got to do something meaningful. Some brothers and sisters later told me that writing that letter to protect the interests of the church showed that I really had changed, that I had gained a sense of righteousness. Hearing this from them was so moving for me. I knew in my heart that practicing the truth and having that little bit of change was all achieved by God’s judgment and chastisement. I give thanks to Almighty God for my salvation!

48. Practice the Truth to Live Out a Human Likeness

By Miao Xiao, China

I used to think that by doing my duty, getting along with brothers and sisters, and not committing obvious sins, I was living out a human likeness. But I was judged and exposed over and over again by God's words and I finally saw that having a human likeness isn't just about external behavior. The key is to practice God's words, let go of our own interests and hold to principles when something happens, uphold God's work, and care for His will.

In July 2018, a sister in our church was arrested while spreading the gospel. She'd been at my house, so the police would know where I lived if they'd been tailing her. We rushed to move somewhere else. Soon after settling in, a supervisor came and said, "Three brothers and sisters were followed and arrested. Everyone at the places they went for gatherings has been moved. You should be careful." I figured, "Since the police had already arrested some brothers and sisters, they must've been tracking them for quite a while. The Communist Party hates God and the truth. They bide their time to search for clues and to catch the big fish to obliterate God's church and apprehend believers. All of our gathering places could've been watched and everyone living in those places should move as soon as possible." But the supervisor just notified the places the ones who'd been arrested had been to, not any of the other ones. I wondered if I should say something to her. If I didn't and something happened, who knows how many could be arrested and tortured? This would harm the church's work, too. But if I did speak up and she didn't listen, or said I was too timid, wouldn't her positive image of me be destroyed? I thought of these words

from God just as I was worrying over this: **“Do everything that is beneficial to God’s work and nothing that is detrimental to the interests of God’s work. Defend God’s name, God’s testimony, and God’s work”**

(The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Ten Administrative Decrees That Must Be Obeyed by God’s Chosen People in the Age of Kingdom). This reminded me that as a believer, I should be upholding God’s work and the church’s interests. And so, I shared my thoughts and views with her. I hadn’t finished speaking before she pulled a long face and said, “Move? If we run away at the slightest thing, is that faith in God’s rule? I used to think you had stature and could take the lead in the team, but it turns out you shrink back as soon as something happens.” I was so upset to hear this. What would the others think after she dealt with me that way? How could I face her after that? But then I thought about upholding the church’s work and protecting brothers’ and sisters’ safety, so I wanted to bring it up again. But seeing how staunch she was worried me. If I kept bringing it up right after being dealt with, she’d say that I lacked the reality of the truth and that I was arrogant and stubborn. Would she still see me as a seeker of the truth? She’d always valued me, including me in important duties and consulting with me on things. If I insisted on my own opinion, she might stop training me and then the others would look down on me. I decided to let it go. I kept my head down and didn’t say a word.

After she left, I felt really unsettled, so I said a silent prayer. Then these words of God came to mind: **“Conscience and reason should both be components of a person’s humanity. These are both most fundamental and most important. What kind of person is one who lacks conscience and does not have the reason of normal humanity? Generally speaking, he is a person who lacks humanity, a person of bad humanity. Let’s analyze this closely. How does this person manifest**

corrupt humanity such that people say he has no humanity? What characteristics do such people possess? What specific manifestations do they present? Such people are perfunctory in their actions and stand aloof from anything that does not concern them personally. They do not consider the interests of God's house, nor do they show consideration for God's will. They take on no burden of testifying for God or performing their duties, and they have no sense of responsibility. ... There are even people who, upon seeing a problem in the performance of their duty, remain silent. They see that others are causing interruptions and disturbances, yet do nothing to stop them. They do not consider the interests of God's house in the least, nor do they at all think about their own duties or responsibilities. They speak, act, stand out, put forth effort, and expend energy only for their own vanity, prestige, position, interests, and honor" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Give Your True Heart to God, and You Can Obtain the Truth). God's words revealed my exact state. I knew those places could be in danger and the people there could be arrested if they weren't moved. But I was afraid the supervisor would say I was cowardly and lacked faith and she wouldn't think as highly of me. I didn't dare stick to the principles and uphold the church's work. I knew the truth but didn't practice it. I prayed to God, "Oh God! Reality has shown that I don't practice the truth in my faith. I don't uphold God's work. I just think of my own prestige, status, and interests. I'm so selfish and despicable! God, please give me Your guidance. I wish to truly repent." Then I remembered that Work Arrangements stipulates that we always have to be mindful of safety in our duty. With a safe environment, brothers and sisters can calmly do their duty, and the work of God's house won't easily be disrupted. After that, I shared my thoughts with some other people on the team, and they agreed with me that the other

sites were in danger and should be moved. I decided I'd bring it up with the supervisor again when I saw her. I also prayed to God and asked Him for the courage to practice the truth.

A few days later, Sister Zhang, another supervisor, visited our team. She asked us if we'd heard about the arrests and what we thought. I quickly said, "I think the other gathering places might not be safe either. We should tell them to move right away in case—" Before I could finish, Sister Zhang said sternly, "Safe? Where is it safe to believe in God in China? Where are we free from danger? This is a crucial time for spreading the gospel. How could we do our duty if we cower at every turn? Do you want to hide until God's work is done and the Communist Party falls?" After hearing what she said, I thought, "That's not what I meant. God told us in the Age of Grace, **'Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the middle of wolves: be you therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves'** (Matthew 10:16). **'When they persecute you in this city, flee you into another'** (Matthew 10:23). Doing our duty in China requires wisdom." But from Sister Zhang's response I could see she didn't want these sites to be moved and if I insisted, she might say I wouldn't accept the truth, that there was something wrong with me. Then she went on to say, "Cowards can't do their duty. They turn into Judases when they're arrested." This left me feeling really conflicted. If I kept suggesting everyone move, the supervisors would probably just see me as a coward. They might even dismiss me. What would the others think of me then? With my enthusiasm, they'd had a good impression of me and they'd ask me for fellowship on their problems. If they thought I was cowardly and wouldn't accept the truth, they wouldn't see me the same way and I'd be embarrassed to face them. I gave it a lot of thought, but my desire to do the right thing had vanished. I didn't want to be difficult with

the supervisor. I said, “I was just sharing my thoughts. What happens is up to you guys.”

One morning a few days later, a sister told us, flustered, that after those arrests some of the gathering sites weren’t moved quickly enough. The police had been tracking them, so three supervisors and some people from gathering sites had been detained. This was so upsetting for me to hear. If I’d just stuck to the principles and explained the importance at the time, or if I’d contacted the church leader directly, we probably wouldn’t have been in that situation. So many had been arrested and the church’s work was seriously hindered. It was directly related to me not being responsible or going by the principles. But it was too late now. The only thing to do was to notify all those potentially endangered as soon as possible so they wouldn’t fall into the CCP’s evil hands. I got brothers and sisters on that right away.

I reflected on it later. I knew I should protect the interests of God’s house and the church’s work, so why hadn’t I done that in practice? Why was I so selfish, why did I just protect my own interests? Then I read this in God’s words: **“Until people have experienced God’s work and gained the truth, it is Satan’s nature that takes charge and dominates them from within. What, specifically, does that nature entail? For example, why are you selfish? Why do you protect your own position? Why do you have such strong emotions? Why do you enjoy those unrighteous things? Why do you like those evils? What is the basis for your fondness for such things? Where do these things come from? Why are you so happy to accept them? By now, you have all come to understand that the main reason behind all these things is that Satan’s poison is within you. As for what Satan’s poison is, it can be fully expressed with words. For example, if you ask some evildoers why they committed evil, they will answer, ‘Because it’s every man for himself, and the devil take**

the hindmost.’ This single phrase expresses the very root of the problem. Satan’s logic has become people’s lives. They may do things for this purpose or that, but they are only doing it for themselves. Everyone thinks that since it is every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost, people should live for their own sakes, and do everything in their power to secure a good position for the sake of food and fine clothing. ‘Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost’—this is the life and the philosophy of man, and it also represents human nature. These words of Satan are precisely the poison of Satan, and when people internalize it, it becomes their nature. Satan’s nature is exposed through these words; they represent it completely. This poison becomes people’s lives as well as the foundation of their existence, and corrupted humanity has been consistently dominated by this poison for thousands of years” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. How to Walk the Path of Peter). God’s words reveal the root of our selfishness. We live by satanic philosophies such as “Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost” and “Sensible people are good at self-protection, seeking only to avoid making mistakes.” They’ve become our very nature. Everyone fights and lives for themselves and will even sacrifice others’ interests for their own. Corrupt people all live this way, becoming more selfish and deceitful, and the world becomes darker and more evil. Even as a person of faith, God’s words hadn’t become my life. My thinking was still corroded by these satanic poisons, which is why I knew the truth but didn’t practice it. I was afraid of offending the supervisors and hurting my reputation. It wasn’t the truth and the church’s work that were paramount, but my own name and status. I was so selfish! God predetermines what duty I do and when. But I stupidly thought my fate was in the supervisors’ hands, so offending them would be the end of my duty. Wasn’t I denying

that the truth and righteousness rule in God's house? I saw things just like a nonbeliever. I wasn't a believer. Then I thought of this in God's words: **"No matter how great the loss to God's work and the interests of His house, you feel no reproach from your conscience, which means that you are someone who lives by their satanic disposition. Satan controls you and causes you to live as something neither quite human nor quite demon. You eat what is God's, drink what is God's, and enjoy all that comes from Him, yet, when the work of God's house suffers any loss, you think it has nothing to do with you, and, when you see it happen, you even 'bend your elbow outward,'^[a] and do not take God's side, nor do you uphold God's work or the interests of God's house. This means Satan has power over you, does it not? Do such people live as human beings? Clearly, they are demons, not humans!"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only Those Who Practice the Truth Are God-Fearing).

Almighty God's words pierced my heart like a sword. I breathed the air and ate the food God had made, enjoying life and truth from Him without thinking of repaying His love. I saw the work of God's house seriously damaged and brothers and sisters in danger, but I didn't dare uphold the principles, afraid for myself. That meant over 20 people were arrested, jailed, and tortured and our gospel work was seriously hindered. Living in corruption had unspeakable consequences. I was simply doing evil. I never used to understand why God hated selfish people, why He said they lacked humanity and belonged to Satan. Now I understood that the selfish only think of themselves, not others, and even protect their own interests to the detriment of the church's work. How is that humane? Even animals are better. Dogs know how to protect their owners' homes and be loyal, but even though God had given me so much, I still bit the hand that fed me. I wasn't loyal at all and didn't deserve to be called human. Then I saw that

God calling selfish people living Satans wasn't overdoing it at all. If I didn't repent and change and practice the truth, I'd do evil, resist God, and be punished by Him. This failure showed me that without pursuing the truth and resolving satanic dispositions, we can't practice the truth and obey God. Then we'll never change our dispositions or be saved no matter how long we believe, how much we sacrifice or suffer. Then I prayed to God, "Almighty God! So much harm has come to the church's work and brothers and sisters because I haven't practiced the truth or been principled. God, I've done evil. I'm ready to repent and accept Your scrutiny. If I still don't change, but I'm selfish and don't support the work of God's house, may You judge and chastise me."

I read this in God's words after my prayer: **"When you reveal yourself to be selfish and ignoble, and have become conscious of this, you should seek the truth: What should I do to be in line with God's will? How should I act so that it benefits everyone? That is, you must begin by setting your own interests aside, gradually giving them up according to your stature, a little at a time. After you have experienced this a few times, you will have set them aside completely, and as you do so, you will feel more and more steadfast. The more you set your interests aside, the more you will feel that as a human being, you should have conscience and reason. You will feel that without selfish motives, you are being a straightforward, upright person, and you are doing things entirely in order to satisfy God. You will feel that such behavior makes you worthy of being called 'human,' and that in living this way on earth, you are being open and honest, you are being a genuine person, you have a clear conscience, and are worthy of all the things bestowed upon you by God. The more you live like this, the more steadfast and the brighter you will feel. As such, will you not have set**

foot upon the right track?” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Give Your True Heart to God, and You Can Obtain the Truth). **“Do not always do things for your own sake and do not constantly consider your own interests; give no thought to your own status, prestige, or reputation. Also do not consider the interests of man. You must first give thought to the interests of God’s house, and make them your first priority. You should be considerate of God’s will and begin by contemplating whether or not you have been impure in the fulfillment of your duty, whether you have done your utmost to be loyal, done your best to fulfill your responsibilities, and given your all, as well as whether or not you have wholeheartedly given thought to your duty and the work of God’s house. You must give consideration to these things. Think about them frequently, and it will be easier for you to perform your duty well”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Give Your True Heart to God, and You Can Obtain the Truth). Then I understood that as a Christian, the only way to live with integrity, honor, and humanity is to live by God’s words and the truth, to be mindful of His will, to let go of our interests and protect God’s work in all things. Then we’d feel at peace. I knew I had to practice God’s words and seek to be an upright person.

One evening in November, it was after 10 p.m. when Sister Li, a new supervisor, came to our team. She said Sister Liu, her working partner, left to meet a sister coming from out of town a couple of days before, but she never came back. She was afraid she’d been arrested. If so, the others had to be told to move right away. She thought that Sister Liu could also have gone home for some reason and moving everyone would impact their duties. She didn’t know what to do. Hearing this, I thought, “Sister Liu’s believed in God for years and been solid in her duty. She would have let us know if she had gone home. She was probably arrested. I should tell the

leaders right away.” But then I thought, “Sister Li is a supervisor. If she’s not sure and she’s afraid of disrupting the church’s work, how can I be sure? If we go to all the trouble to move everyone but Sister Liu wasn’t arrested, the leader might deal with us and say we’re disrupting the church’s work. Should I speak up, or not?”

In my struggle, I read God’s words: **“Do everything that is beneficial to God’s work and nothing that is detrimental to the interests of God’s work. Defend God’s name, God’s testimony, and God’s work”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Ten Administrative Decrees That Must Be Obeyed by God’s Chosen People in the Age of Kingdom). **“If the more crucial a moment it is, the more able people are to submit and let go of their self-interests, vanity, and pride, and perform their duties properly, only then will they be remembered by God. Those are all good deeds! Regardless of what people do, which is more important—their vanity and pride, or God’s glory? (God’s glory.) Which are more important—your responsibilities, or your own interests? Fulfilling your responsibilities is what is most important, and you are duty-bound to them”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Gaining God and the Truth Is the Happiest of Things). God clearly tells us to uphold His work and do our duty well. Now facing a conflict between my interests and those of the church, God was watching. If I was selfish like before, that would be lacking humanity. Last time had been a painful lesson, a terrible price to pay. I couldn’t repeat that mistake. I said to Sister Li, “It’s possible Sister Liu went back home, but we can’t be sure. We should plan for the worst and move those brothers and sisters. Even if we’re wrong, it’s for the church’s work and for everyone’s safety. We’re looking at the big picture. If we see danger and don’t act in time and people are arrested, we’ll have been Judases and any regrets will come too late. The danger is growing by the day. Let’s take care of it right away.” I

told her about how some church members had been arrested before and she agreed with me. She got things started early the next morning, and the night after that, we also cleared out of our place.

While doing this, the supervisor said, “Sister Liu and that other sister were arrested and the police got four others from a gathering place. We moved just in time. If we’d waited, even more people would’ve been taken.” I was seething when I heard this. The Communist Party is so evil! In a country as big as China, there’s nowhere for Christians to hide! I also felt how important it is to protect the church’s interests. I felt better because this time I’d been able to practice the truth and be responsible and so less damage was done. I felt living by God’s words is the only way to live with humanity. I also personally experienced that without the judgment of God’s words, I’d still be bound by satanic philosophies and dispositions, doing evil and resisting God. I wouldn’t be able to let go of my own interests and adhere to principles, and I’d never have humanity. Just as Almighty God’s words say: **“If you can fulfill your responsibilities, perform your obligations and duties, set aside your selfish desires, set aside your own intents and motives, have consideration for God’s will, and put the interests of God and His house first, then after experiencing this for a while, you will feel that this is a good way to live. It is living straightforwardly and honestly, without being a base person or a good-for-nothing, and living justly and honorably rather than being narrow-minded or mean. You will feel that this is how a person should live and act”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Give Your True Heart to God, and You Can Obtain the Truth).

Footnotes:

a. “Bend one’s elbow outward” is a Chinese idiom, which means a person is helping others at the expense of people close to that person, for example parents, children, relatives or siblings.

49. A Wonderful Way to Live

By Xunqiu, Japan

When I was little, my parents taught me not to be too direct with others, and never to rock the boat, and that was the philosophy for living. So I always lived by satanic philosophies like “Keeping silent on the faults of good friends makes for a long and good friendship” and “Never hit people below the belt” with classmates, friends, neighbors—everyone. Whenever I saw someone do something wrong, I didn’t want to embarrass them and tried not to expose their shortcomings. People always praised me for being understanding and considerate of others, and I thought it was a good way to be, too, that it was the most basic principle for getting along with others. After I gained faith and experienced the judgment and chastisement of God’s words, I realized that’s not actually being a good person, but it’s acting according to satanic life philosophies. It doesn’t help anyone, and it can even hurt other people. My outlook on things changed and God’s words gave me the principles of conduct.

When I was selected as a church leader in August 2019, I was so grateful to God for the opportunity. I silently resolved to shoulder the responsibility of that duty. After a little while, I noticed some issues with brothers’ and sisters’ work. For example, some of them were slipshod in their duty, leading to some obvious problems with videos they worked on. Some didn’t work well with others, so everyone’s work was out of sync, and work efficiency suffered. When I saw this, I thought, “They’re showing corruption in their duties. The work of God’s house will surely be severely impacted if it’s not pointed out. I need to fellowship with them and analyze it so they understand this and change.” But then I thought, “If I expose everyone’s problems right after taking on this duty, what will they think of

me? Will they say I'm being too strict with them, that I'm too harsh and hard to get along with? Won't it alienate everyone if I give them that kind of impression? Forget it. I won't mention it for now. First I have to establish a good relationship with everyone." So, I just glossed over all these brothers' and sisters' issues, always afraid of embarrassing people or putting them on the spot, which would damage our rapport.

Once, a sister told me that Brother Wang was really stubborn in his duty and wouldn't take any suggestions, and it hindered work progress. I asked around to get some of the others' opinions, and they all said that Brother Wang was arrogant, imperious, and condescending, and most of the people who worked with him felt constrained. Hearing this feedback, I realized that Brother Wang had a pretty serious problem and not dealing with it right away wouldn't do any favors for his life entry or the work of God's house. I had to seek him out for fellowship, to help him understand the seriousness of the issue. But when I did speak with Brother Wang, I just wanted to turn tail. I thought, "All these issues the others brought up are the worst parts of Brother Wang. If I lay out every single problem, won't he feel I'm just belittling him as if he's totally without merit? Won't that be humiliating? Then if he feels like I'm targeting him personally, won't he resent me for it? We see each other constantly, in gatherings, doing our duty. How will we get along if things become awkward between us?" Then I thought about how he always said in gatherings that he had an arrogant disposition, so if I just hinted at this without really delving into it and hitting any sensitive spots, that wouldn't be too embarrassing for him and things wouldn't be so awkward between us. So in our fellowship I just lightly touched on it, saying he was arrogant and was condescending toward others. He heard me out and admitted that he had those problems, that he was already aware of them. I knew he hadn't realized how serious the issue

was, but I didn't say anything further. Since he hadn't gained any real understanding of himself, he remained just as stubborn as ever in his duty, unable to work with others and causing delays in the church's work. He was later transferred out. He took on another duty, but still encumbered by his corrupt disposition, he wasn't very effective there, either. One day, his supervisor said to me angrily, "Were you aware of Brother Wang's problems? If so, why didn't you fellowship with him? He's had a serious impact on our work progress." Her stern words felt to me like God reprimanding me through her for not practicing the truth. I felt really bad, really guilty. If only I'd pointed out his issues in time and he'd really reflected on them, he might've been able to do his duty properly. But instead, he didn't have any real understanding of his satanic nature, so he'd not only failed in his previous duty, but hadn't changed after being transferred. He was still hindering the church's work. Wasn't I hurting others and delaying the work of God's house? I used to think I had good humanity, but now I saw I was just maintaining my relationships with others so I wouldn't embarrass them and leave them with a bad impression. But that wasn't good for others' life entry or the work of God's house at all. Was that having good humanity?

I later read this in God's words: **"There must be a standard for having good humanity. It does not involve taking the path of moderation, not sticking to principles, endeavoring not to offend anyone, currying favor everywhere you go, being smooth and slick with everyone you meet, and making everyone feel good. This is not the standard. So what is the standard? It includes treating God, other people, and events with a true heart, being able to take responsibility, and doing all this in a way that is evident for everyone to see and feel. Moreover, God searches people's hearts and knows them, each and**

every one. Some people always boast that they possess good humanity, claiming never to have done anything bad, stolen others' possessions, or coveted other people's things. They even go so far as to allow others to benefit at their own expense when there is a dispute over interests, preferring to suffer loss, and they never say anything bad about anyone just so that everyone else thinks they are good people. However, when performing their duties in God's house, they are wily and slippery, always scheming for themselves. Never do they think of the interests of God's house, never do they treat as urgent the things God treats as urgent or think as God thinks, and never can they set aside their own interests so as to perform their duties. They never forsake their own interests. Even when they see evildoers committing evil, they do not expose them; they have no principles whatsoever. This is not an example of good humanity" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last

Days. Give Your True Heart to God, and You Can Obtain the Truth). God's words lay out the principles of conduct. A truly good person doesn't take the path of moderation or stay quiet about other people's problems. They don't seek total harmony, either, or try to maintain perfect rapport with others. The standard for a truly good person lies in being principled and having a sense of justice. It's upholding principles without fear of offending people to protect God's house when its interests are compromised. In my interactions with brothers and sisters, I just focused on not embarrassing or offending anyone, thinking that everyone would think well of me as long as I maintained my relationships with them. But that wasn't in line with the principles of the truth at all. I saw others doing things out of corruption and disrupting the work of God's house, but wanting to protect my good image, I didn't protect the church's interests, but turned a blind eye. I let problems slide that I saw clearly. Especially with Brother Wang, I knew his issues had

already severely impacted the work of God's house. But I was afraid he might think I was personally targeting him, that he wouldn't accept what I said and would develop a bias against me. So when I fellowshiped with him, I just glossed over things, underplaying the issue. As a result, he didn't take his problems seriously. On the surface, I maintained my good image of being harmless, but in fact, I was doing damage to the church's work and the life entry of brothers and sisters. I saw I was just a "nice guy," a people pleaser, a through-and-through deceiver.

I read this in God's words in my devotionals after that: **"Some church leaders do not rebuke brothers or sisters whom they see performing their duty carelessly and perfunctorily, though they should. When they see something that is clearly detrimental to the interests of God's house, they turn a blind eye and make no inquiries, so as not to cause the least offense to others. Their true purpose and goal are not to show consideration for others' weaknesses—they know full well what they intend: 'If I keep this up and don't cause offense to anyone, they'll think I'm a good leader. They'll have a good, high opinion of me. They'll favor me and like me.'**

practical problems; instead, they are ever indulgent of others' weaknesses and negativity, and even their carelessness and apathy. They consistently let these people's actions and behaviors go without being labeled for what they are, and, precisely because they do so, most people come to think, 'Our leader is like a mother to us. They have even more understanding for our weaknesses than God does. Our stature may be too small to live up to God's requirements, but it's enough that we can live up to our leader's. They are a good leader for us. If a day comes when the Above replaces our leader, we should make our voices heard, and put forward our different opinions and wishes. We should try to negotiate with the Above.' If people harbor such thoughts—if they have this sort of relationship with their leader, and such an impression of them, and have developed in their hearts such feelings of dependence, admiration, respect, and adoration toward their leader—how, then, ought the leader to feel? If, in this matter, they feel some self-reproach, some unease, and feel indebted to God, they should then not fixate on their status or image in the hearts of others. They should testify to God and exalt Him, so that He has a place in people's hearts, and so that people revere God as great. Only thus will their heart be truly at peace, and one who does so is one who pursues the truth. If this is not the goal behind their actions, however, and they instead use these methods and techniques to entice people to stray from the true way and forsake the truth, going so far as to indulge people's careless, perfunctory, and irresponsible performance of their duties, with an aim to occupy a certain place in people's hearts and win their goodwill, is this not an attempt to win people over? And is this not an evil, detestable thing? It is abhorrent!' (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. For Leaders and Workers, Choosing a Path Is of Utmost Importance (1)). God's

words revealed the essence of and motives behind my actions. Since becoming a leader, I'd just been tiptoeing around to stay on good terms with people. I wouldn't bring people's issues to light, but just protected their dignity. I didn't even have a sense of urgency when I saw Brother Wang being disruptive and hindering the church's work. Instead I just watched my words around everyone, wanting to maintain my place among them. I seemed gentle and harmless from the outside, but that was a facade that misled brothers and sisters. I used what people saw as nice behavior and words to win people over so they'd like me and look up to me. That way I could strengthen my position. I wanted to smooth my own path and I did that at the cost of the interests of God's house. I went against the principles of the truth and harmed the work of God's house. I was walking the path of the antichrists. At this point, God's words came to mind: **"You may be exceptionally amiable and devoted toward your relatives, friends, wife (or husband), sons and daughters, and parents, and never take advantage of others, but if you are incapable of compatibility with Christ, if you are unable to interact in harmony with Him, then even if you expend your all in relief to your neighbors or take meticulous care of your father, mother, and members of your household, I would say that you are still wicked, and moreover one full of cunning tricks"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Those Who Are Incompatible With Christ Are Surely Opponents of God). God's house let me act as a leader to guide others to practice the truth and do their duty, to uphold the work of God's house, to fellowship on the truth to resolve others' issues so they could understand their corrupt disposition and learn to do their duty with principle. That was my responsibility. But I didn't do my duty as God requires. I just focused on my relationships and keeping my prestige with others, which ultimately harmed the work of God's house and hindered others' life entry. I was

acting on Satan's side. I saw I was exactly what God exposed in His words. Not only was I not a good person, but I was a slippery, selfish, despicable evil person. If I didn't repent and change, I'd just become a stumbling block for brothers' and sisters' life entry. I finally understood my rules for life in my interactions with others. I truly saw that "Keeping silent on the faults of good friends makes for a long and good friendship" and "Never hit people below the belt" are satanic poisons, not principles for genuine conduct. I came before God in prayer, willing to repent and correct my wrong pursuit.

I later read this in God's words: **"If you want to have a normal relationship with God, then your heart must turn to God. With this as a foundation, you will also have a normal relationship with other people. If you do not have a normal relationship with God, then no matter what you do to maintain your relationships with other people, no matter how hard you work or how much energy you exert, it will all just pertain to a human philosophy for living. You are maintaining your position among people through a human perspective and a human philosophy so that people will praise you, but you are not following the word of God to establish normal relationships with people. If you do not focus on your relationships with people but maintain a normal relationship with God, if you are willing to give your heart to God and learn to obey Him, then naturally your relationships with all people will become normal. This way, these relationships are not established in the flesh, but on the foundation of God's love. There are almost no fleshly interactions, but in the spirit there is fellowship, mutual love, mutual comfort, and provision for one another. This is all done on the foundation of a heart that satisfies God. These relationships are not maintained by relying on a human philosophy for living, but are formed very naturally through carrying a burden for God. It does not**

require man-made effort. You need only practice according to God's word principle" (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. It Is Very Important to Establish a Normal Relationship With God). God's words showed me that proper interpersonal relationships can't be established using worldly philosophies for living. We should nourish others' spirits according to God's words, and only in this way will it benefit everyone. When I saw others doing their duty with corrupt dispositions which impacted their work, I shouldn't have focused on my own status and image. I should have applied God's words to the problem to help them understand their corrupt dispositions, and fellowshiped on God's will so they could perform their duty well. God would have approved. In gatherings, Brother Wang was often able to understand himself in light of God's words, which means he wanted to address his problems. It was just that he didn't understand the root of the issue and didn't truly hate himself so he still lived within his corrupt dispositions when problems came up. If I'd used God's words to analyze the essence of the problem so he could find a path of practice in them, this would have actually helped him. Realizing this, I wanted to change my wrong pursuit and do things according to God's requirements. After that, I summarized Brother Wang's issues in his duty and listed them out one by one. I fellowshiped with him, dissecting his behavior and analyzing the root of the issue. After that, he didn't hate me or shun me like I'd thought he would, but was really accepting of my fellowship. He sent me a message later, saying "It's great that you brought this up with me, otherwise I wouldn't have seen how serious the problem is." I was really moved. Once I corrected my motives and didn't focus on what others thought of me, but practiced God's words and upheld principles, I could offer practical support to those around me. I also felt at ease and at peace.

Later, I noticed a sister who procrastinated and was willful in her duty, which led to a lot of problems cropping up. She saw these problems and was really negative about it. I saw that these issues were largely from her attitude toward her duty, so I wanted to bring this up. But then I thought, “She’s already feeling down and discouraged. If I talk about her problems, won’t I be throwing salt on the wound? If she becomes even more negative, people might say I’m lacking humanity, that I’m unforgiving, and then ostracize me.” I thought it would be enough if I could find a way to fix the problems in her duty, then I wouldn’t have to mention her issues. Then I realized I was acting according to those satanic philosophies again, and if I didn’t show this sister her issues, she wouldn’t see her own corrupt disposition and that wouldn’t help her, either. I prayed to God and sought the truths I should enter into in that situation. After that, I read this in God’s words: **“God is never irresolute or hesitant in His actions; the principles and purposes behind His actions are all clear and transparent, pure and flawless, with absolutely no ruses or schemes intermingled within. In other words, God’s essence contains no darkness or evil”** (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique II). **“God does not moderate; He is untainted by human ideas. For Him, one is one and two is two; right is right and wrong is wrong. There is no ambiguity”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only Being Truly Obedient Is a Real Belief). This showed me that God is very principled in His words and deeds, that He knows what He likes and dislikes. God approves when people do positive things, but when people go against the truth and hurt the interests of God’s house, He loathes this. God is crystal clear in His actions—there’s no ambiguity. This made me think of how, before the Lord Jesus was crucified, Peter said, “Be it far from You, Lord: this shall not be to You” (Matthew 16:22). Yet the Lord said, **“Get you behind Me, Satan”** (Matthew 16:23). By saying this, Peter was

essentially standing in the way of God's work, which is why God identified this as being from Satan. The Lord Jesus didn't hold back for fear of hurting Peter's self-regard or upsetting him. He made a clear determination based on Peter's actions so he could see God's attitude was clear and know the nature of his actions. God's attitude toward people showed me the principles of practice. Tolerance and patience are called for with some problems of brothers and sisters, but if something impacts their duty or hinders the work of God's house, that calls for fellowship and adherence to the principles of the truth. I couldn't be a middle-of-the-road people pleaser. I knew that sister was feeling negative, but with the right motives, without looking down on her or scolding her imperiously, but lovingly fellowshiping on the truth to help analyze her problems, she could understand her corrupt disposition. Then we could seek a path of practice and my duty would be done according to God's will. I later sought her out to fellowship on her problems and discuss her mistaken perspectives. I also shared my own experience to serve as guidance. At first, I was afraid that kind of fellowship was too harsh and she might not be able to handle it. But when I was done, she didn't become more depressed or biased against me like I'd thought, but she said very sincerely that she really hadn't understood her problems before and she could accept being dealt with that way. Her attitude in her duty improved after that and she started to consciously seek the principles of the truth. I was really happy to see this. Practicing the truth and doing my duty according to God's requirements felt so good.

In my interactions with others, I'd always been afraid of embarrassing people by coming on too strong, so I'd handled my relationships based on worldly philosophies. It was an exhausting way to live. Through these experiences and the guidance of God's words, I learned what it is to be a

truly good person. I also experienced that it's crucial to uphold the principles of the truth and practice God's words when interacting with others. That's the real principle of good conduct. Thanks be to God!

50. What Lies Behind a “Good Image”

By Wei Chen, South Korea

In December 2019, I was working as the gospel deacon in the church. After a while, I found that when the leaders noticed issues in how brothers and sisters performed their duties, they'd point them out directly, sometimes in a really harsh tone. I figured it was right for them to point these things out, but their approach was shaming and could easily offend people. I didn't want to be like them. Such things had to be said more tactfully to leave a good impression on people. That way I'd win everyone's support and it would be easier to do my job. Then in the next election, I might have a shot at being picked as a leader. With that in mind, I was really careful about how I interacted with brothers and sisters. I tried to be really tactful and not hurt anyone's feelings so everything was more palatable.

At one point I noticed that Sister Cheng cherrypicked easier tasks and shirked anything difficult, and she'd just retreat whenever she had to share the gospel with someone with a lot of notions or a poor attitude. And afterward she wouldn't go equip herself with the relevant truths to resolve their notions. I saw she didn't have the right attitude toward her duty and that there was no way she could do her duty well if she went on that way. I was going to mention it to her and share fellowship, but just as I was about to send her a message, it occurred to me that although she backed down in the face of difficulties, she did generally achieve things in her duty. If I mentioned her problem, she might say I was too demanding, and it could turn her against me. Then what would I do if she didn't go along with any work arrangements I made in the future? If I didn't perform well in my duty, wouldn't the leaders say I wasn't competent for the job? So as not to offend her, I didn't breathe a word about her issue, but just sent her an

encouraging message: “Some of the people we share the gospel with have a lot of notions, but they’re true believers. We have to have love and patience, and pray and lean on God more. The more difficulties we face, the more our faith can be perfected. We absolutely can’t shrink back.” She agreed at the time, but without any understanding of her problem, she kept turning away from anything difficult. She didn’t change at all. But I wasn’t aware of the problem at that time and I thought I was doing great. Every time I encountered something similar, I handled it like that. I never dealt with people or exposed their corruption or flaws, so brothers and sisters were all happy to work with me and they’d seek me out to talk about their states. That gave me even more confidence in my approach and I thought brothers and sisters thought highly of me, that everyone was really supportive of me.

Later on, I noticed that Sister Xia was pretty arrogant and self-righteous. She was stubborn and didn’t work well with others, and this had an impact on our gospel work. I thought about how Sister Xia was really arrogant and wouldn’t accept others’ suggestions, which then impacted her duty. I figured I should bring it up with her so she could turn things around. But then I wondered, if I did point it out and she wouldn’t accept it, but got sulky, what would I do then? In a gathering one time, I’d heard her give a pretty positive assessment of me, so I was worried that if I offended her, it might ruin the good image she had of me. If her impression of me changed, that could impact my chances at becoming a leader. After thinking it all through, I ended up not mentioning Sister Xia’s corruption and flaws. Instead I said, “I understand not getting good results in your duty or running into difficulties, but you have to reflect on yourself and think about why. We also need to work well with brothers and sisters.” I skirted the main issue, just giving her a few words of advice and encouragement. One of the leaders checked in with me about our work a few days later and I

mentioned that Sister Xia was arrogant and self-righteous, and that she didn't work well with others. Then the next time Sister Xia saw me, she said, "When the leader asked you about our work a few days ago, I was walking by and happened to overhear you say that I'm arrogant and self-righteous, and that I don't work well with others. You're well aware that I have a serious problem, but you haven't said anything about it to me. You've just been accommodating. I've noticed in the past that you never lose your temper or reprimand people, but always soothe them instead. I thought you were a really good person. Now I realize you're really 'skilled,' that you have your tactics. To put it bluntly, you're a hypocrite." Called out so directly by her, for a moment I could feel my face going beet red. The words "hypocrite" and "tactics" were burned into my brain. I was really upset and came before God in prayer, asking Him to guide me to understand my own corrupt disposition.

I read a passage of God's words in my devotionals the next day. **"Deceitfulness is often outwardly evident. When someone is said to be very sly and shrewd with words, that is deceitfulness. And what is the chief characteristic of wickedness? Wickedness is when what people say is especially pleasing to the ear, when it all seems right, and irreproachable, and good no matter which way you look at it, but their actions are especially wicked, and highly furtive, and not easily discernible. They often employ some right words and nice-sounding phrases, and use certain doctrines, arguments, and techniques that are in line with people's feelings to pull the wool over their eyes; they pretend to go one way but actually go another, using actions that are seemingly good, and right, in line with people's feelings, and principled to achieve their secret aims. This is wickedness. People usually believe this to be deceitfulness. They have less knowledge of wickedness, and**

dissect it less, too; wickedness is actually more difficult to identify than deceitfulness, for it is more hidden, and the methods and techniques involved are more ‘clever.’ When people have a deceitful disposition within them, it usually only takes two or three days before you can see that they are deceitful, or that their actions and the kinds of things they say indicate a deceitful disposition. But when someone is said to be wicked, this is not something that can be discerned in one or two days. For if nothing significant or specific happens over the short-term, listening to their words alone you would think that they are a good person, that they are able to give things up and expend themselves, that they understand spiritual things, and everything they say is right, and you would have a hard time telling them for what they really are. There are many who say the right thing, do the right thing, and can spout doctrine after doctrine. After two or three days with such a person, you think them someone who understands spiritual things, who has a heart that loves God, who acts with conscience and sense. But then you start entrusting them with tasks, and you soon realize that they are not honest, that they are even more insidious than deceitful people—that they are something wicked. They often choose the right words, words that fit with the truth, that are in line with people’s feelings and with humanity, words that sound nice, and beguiling words to converse with people, in one regard, to establish themselves, and in another regard, to deceive others, giving them status and prestige among people, all of which easily bewitches those who are ignorant, who have a shallow understanding of the truth, who do not understand spiritual things, and who lack a foundation in their faith in God. **This is what people with a wicked disposition do”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. For Leaders and Workers, Choosing a Path Is of Utmost Importance (3)). By holding up

my own behavior against God's words, I realized my evil disposition was driving my actions. When I saw problems in brothers' and sisters' duties that were impacting their work, I wouldn't expose them or bring up their problems so they'd all say I was a nice person and speak well of me. I clearly saw that Sister Cheng didn't have the right attitude in her duty, that she only did what was easy and shirked anything difficult. I also saw that Sister Xia was arrogant and self-righteous, and that it was negatively affecting the church's gospel work. I should have mentioned these things to them and shared fellowship to help them. But I was worried about what they'd think of me, that they wouldn't support me in my work, and then the leaders would think poorly of me if my performance suffered. So I just said some nice-sounding, disingenuous things to encourage them. This way I could protect my relationships with them and maintain my image, and they'd continue to like my work—killing two birds with one stone. I was so crafty and conniving, and I'd been pulling the wool over people's eyes. I'd deceived them, making them think I was really caring and understanding, and they really looked up to me and idolized me. Only then did I see that I had a cunning, evil disposition. If it hadn't been for Sister Xia calling me out, and for the revelations of God's words, I still wouldn't have had any understanding of my evil disposition or any idea how serious it was. I saw how evil and despicable my actions had been, that it was disgusting to God and revolting to others!

I read this in God's words after that. **“Some church leaders do not rebuke brothers or sisters whom they see performing their duty carelessly and perfunctorily, though they should. When they see something that is clearly detrimental to the interests of God's house, they turn a blind eye and make no inquiries, so as not to cause the least offense to others. Their true purpose and goal are not to show**

consideration for others' weaknesses—they know full well what they intend: 'If I keep this up and don't cause offense to anyone, they'll think I'm a good leader. They'll have a good, high opinion of me. They'll favor me and like me.' No matter how much damage is done to the interests of God's house, and no matter how greatly God's chosen people are impeded in their life entry, or how greatly their church life is disturbed, such people persist in their satanic philosophy of causing no offense. There is never a sense of self-reproach in their hearts; at most, they might, in passing, make casual mention of some issue, and then be done with it. They do not fellowship the truth, nor do they point out the essence of others' problems, and less still do they dissect people's states. They do not lead people to enter truth reality, and they never communicate what God's will is, or the wrongs people often commit, or the sorts of corrupt disposition people reveal. They do not resolve these practical problems; instead, they are ever indulgent of others' weaknesses and negativity, and even their carelessness and apathy. They consistently let these people's actions and behaviors go without being labeled for what they are, and, precisely because they do so, most people come to think, 'Our leader is like a mother to us. They have even more understanding for our weaknesses than God does. Our stature may be too small to live up to God's requirements, but it's enough that we can live up to our leader's. They are a good leader for us. ...' If people harbor such thoughts—if they have this sort of relationship with their leader, and such an impression of them, and have developed in their hearts such feelings of dependence, admiration, respect, and adoration toward their leader—how, then, ought the leader to feel? If, in this matter, they feel some self-reproach, some unease, and feel indebted to God, they should then not fixate on their

status or image in the hearts of others. They should testify to God and exalt Him, so that He has a place in people's hearts, and so that people revere God as great. Only thus will their heart be truly at peace, and one who does so is one who pursues the truth. If this is not the goal behind their actions, however, and they instead use these methods and techniques to entice people to stray from the true way and forsake the truth, going so far as to indulge people's careless, perfunctory, and irresponsible performance of their duties, with an aim to occupy a certain place in people's hearts and win their goodwill, is this not an attempt to win people over? And is this not an evil, detestable thing? It is abhorrent!" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. For Leaders and Workers, Choosing a Path Is of Utmost Importance (1)). Seeing what God's words revealed, I realized that acting based on my evil disposition was essentially deceiving people and winning them over in an attempt to own them, to control them. It was contrary to God and was exactly how an antichrist behaved! I couldn't help but feel frightened by this thought. In order to protect the position I held in others' hearts and my chances at being elected leader, when I saw problems in brothers' and sisters' duties, I never pointed them out directly or fellowshiped on the truth to resolve them. Instead, I said some nice-sounding things so others would like me and see me as considerate and loving. Without realizing it, I was amassing followers and it ended up that the people I'd deceived not only couldn't see their problems and correct them, but their life entry was damaged, and they even looked up to me and idolized me. That was so evil and despicable of me! My total lack of regard for the lives of brothers and sisters, and indulging them as they performed their duties relying on their corrupt dispositions, had a negative impact on our work. I was fully acting as a minion of Satan, disrupting and undermining the work of God's house. At this realization, I

started to hate my corruption from the bottom of my heart. I came before God to pray and repent. I said, “Oh God, Your words have made me see how serious my evil disposition is and that I’m walking the path of an antichrist. I want to repent and forsake my personal motives and stop acting by my evil disposition.”

I thought of these words from God after my prayer: **“And Jehovah God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat of it: for in the day that you eat thereof you shall surely die.’ ... In these brief words that God spoke, can you see anything of God’s disposition? Are these words of God true? Is there any deception? Is there any falsity? Is there any intimidation? (No.) God honestly, truthfully and sincerely told man what he may eat and what he may not eat. God spoke clearly and plainly. Is there any hidden meaning in these words? Are these words not straightforward? Is there any need for conjecture? (No.) There is no need for guesswork. Their meaning is obvious at a glance. Upon reading them, one feels entirely clear about their meaning. That is, what God wants to say and what He wants to express comes from His heart. The things God expresses are clean, straightforward and clear. There are no covert motives, nor any hidden meanings. He speaks to man directly, telling him what he may eat and what he may not eat”** (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique IV). I read this and really felt how genuine God is with us. When God commanded Adam, He was very clear on what could and couldn’t be eaten so that man knew clearly what to do. There wasn’t anything confusing or misleading in God’s words, and there wasn’t any artifice or deception. God just wanted the best for mankind. He was genuinely thinking of us. He spoke absolutely honestly with man. I saw that God’s essence is sincere,

holy, benevolent, and lovely. He really deserves our trust and admiration. But as for me, I wasn't sincere with brothers and sisters at all. Everything I said and did was tainted with my personal motives. I was full of lies and deceit. I was just deceiving and using people and ultimately harming brothers and sisters. That was so evil of me! I felt incredibly guilty and full of regret at this thought. After that, I went to seek out Sister Xia and Sister Cheng and opened up to them about my corrupt disposition. I also told them about the problems I'd seen in their duties. They didn't think poorly of me at all, but said that my having pointed out their problems so clearly would help them take them to heart, otherwise they wouldn't have realized how serious their problems were. They also told me to feel free to let them know again if I saw problems in the future. I saw some changes in them after that, and they started doing better in their duties. This made me really happy.

In my devotionals after that, I focused on finding solutions for my corrupt disposition in God's words. I read a couple of passages of God's words. **"Whether you now perform your duties or pursue the initial stages of dispositional change, no matter what corrupt dispositions you reveal—you must seek the truth to resolve them. ... If, for example, you always try to disguise yourself with pleasant words, if you always desire a place in the hearts of others and to make others look up to you, if you have these intents, then that means you are being controlled by your disposition. Should you speak these pleasant words? (No.) If you do not speak them, then do you simply hold them in? If you find a cleverer phrasing, a different phrasing by which other people cannot detect your intents, this is still a problem with your disposition. What disposition? That of evil. Are corrupt dispositions easy to resolve? This involves one's nature essence. People have this essence, this root, and it must be dug out bit by bit. It must be dug out from every state, from**

the intents behind every word you speak. It must be dissected and understood from the words you speak. When such awareness grows ever more clear and your spirit ever more astute, you can then achieve change” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only When You Know Yourself Can You Pursue the Truth). **“All that you do, every action, every intention, and every reaction should be brought before God. Even your daily spiritual life—your prayers, your closeness to God, how you eat and drink of God’s words, your fellowship with your brothers and sisters, and your life within the church—and your service in partnership can be brought before God for His scrutiny. It is such practice that will help you achieve growth in life. The process of accepting God’s scrutiny is the process of purification. The more you can accept God’s scrutiny, the more you are purified and the more you are in accord with God’s will, so that you will not be drawn into debauchery, and your heart will live in His presence. The more you accept His scrutiny, the greater are Satan’s humiliation and your ability to forsake the flesh. So, the acceptance of God’s scrutiny is a path of practice people should follow. No matter what you do, even when communing with your brothers and sisters, you can bring your acts before God and seek His scrutiny and aim to obey God Himself; this will make what you practice much more correct. Only if you bring all you do before God and accept God’s scrutiny can you be someone who lives in the presence of God”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God Perfects Those Who Are After His Own Heart). As I considered God’s words, it became clear that in the face of an issue, I had to scrutinize my own thoughts, reflect on the motives behind my words and deeds, bring my speech and actions before God and accept His scrutiny, analyze and know myself when I find myself revealing an evil disposition, and pray and

forsake myself without delay. In this way, that aspect of my corruption would gradually be cleansed.

Later on, I noticed there was a sister who seemed weak and wasn't willing to undergo any hardship. She would turn back whenever she ran into problems in her gospel work. It occurred to me that she wasn't taking responsibility for her duty and I needed to fellowship with her right away to turn things around. But my problem cropped up again. I thought that if I mentioned her problem, she might think I was being too harsh, and she might become resistant and averse to me. I wondered how to frame it so it would be acceptable for her and she wouldn't become biased against me. At this thought, I realized that I was protecting my status and image among brothers and sisters again. I said this prayer to God in my heart: "Oh God, I'm ready to accept Your scrutiny and forsake my personal motives. I want to fellowship on the truth to help my sister and do my duty." After that I shared fellowship with this sister dissecting her problem. I gained a lot of inner peace after putting this into practice. Now I have some discernment over my evil disposition, and when I encounter an issue, I consciously seek the truth and forsake my selfish motives. I'm able to act based on God's words. This has all been achieved through the judgment of God's words. I'm so grateful for God's salvation!

51. I've Seen the Truth of Being a People Pleaser

I used to put a lot of effort into maintaining personal relationships in my interactions with friends, family, and neighbors. I'd put up with just about anything and let people have their way so that no one would have an unkind word to say about me. I never argued with anyone. Even when I noticed that someone had a problem, I still wouldn't say anything. Over time, everyone came to think of me as a good person. I continued to apply this philosophy for living in my affairs and in my interactions with others even after becoming a believer. I remember, not long after gaining my faith, I noticed that Brother Tian, who was in charge of our group's gatherings, was always very gentle in his speech and his fellowship on God's words was enlightening. Whenever something was going on with me or I had some sort of difficulty, I liked seeking him out to help me resolve it, and he was always really patient in fellowship with me. We got along great. We were both elected as church leaders a few years later, and I was thrilled to have the chance to do my duty alongside him. But after a while, I noticed that Brother Tian didn't really bear a burden in his duty, and when brothers and sisters became negative and weak, he'd just go through the motions and share some simplistic fellowship. He didn't really care if anything came of it or not. I thought, "Isn't he being careless in his duty? This will definitely delay brothers' and sisters' life entry. I have to fellowship with him. But then again, he's been doing this duty longer than I have and he has some experience with this work. I've just started doing my duty as a leader. What would he think of me if I told him he's not bearing a burden in his work?" As they say, "Keeping silent on the faults of good friends makes for a long and good friendship." So in order to keep our relationship as it was, I just spoke to him and played down his issues.

In one of our gatherings, some brothers and sisters brought up difficulties they'd encountered in sharing the gospel, hoping we could help them address these issues. I talked to Brother Tian about us going together, but he made the excuse that gospel work wasn't his forte, so he didn't want to go. I fellowshiped with him, saying that our brothers and sisters were having a hard time in their duty, so we should do everything in our power to help them, and that we couldn't do our duty just based on our preferences. He responded with silence, so I thought that was his tacit agreement. To my surprise, he didn't even show up the next day. I felt a little disappointed in him—wasn't it irresponsible of him, a church leader, to not lend a hand to resolve brothers' and sisters' problems? I knew I had to bring it up with him.

I went to talk to Brother Tian immediately after the gathering, and the whole way there I was thinking about how to fellowship with him. But he was so warm and friendly toward me when I got to his house, and I started to feel a little reticent. I thought, "Brother Tian is all smiles and even serving me tea. How can I say this to him? If I say he's irresponsible in his duty and he's in a dangerous state, wouldn't that be really embarrassing for him? As they say, 'Don't raise a hand against a smiling face.' We've always gotten along great. How could we keep working together if I ruin our relationship? We see each other all the time, so it would just be really awkward!" So I said to him very gently, "We need to develop a sense of burden toward our duties. We can't just do things based on our personal preferences." When he hung his head and didn't say a word, I felt bad about saying anything further. I thought about how I'd just barely started out as a church leader and I didn't know the church's work very well yet. There were a lot of things I needed his help with, and as the old saying goes,

“Don’t burn one’s bridges.” I felt I couldn’t be too hard on him, so I didn’t say anything more.

A message later came from our leaders notifying us of a gathering, and Brother Tian and I decided we would each notify some brothers and sisters. I asked him if he had gotten the word out when we saw each other the following day, but he said, totally unconcerned, that he’d gotten busy doing other things and had forgotten about it. Seeing how impassive he looked, I couldn’t help but reproach him. I said, “Doing your duty this way is irresponsible and it could delay the church’s work.” I was surprised when he got a sour look on his face, grabbed his keys, and just left. Seeing his antipathy, I didn’t dare say anything more, afraid it would ruin our relationship completely.

I had seen that Brother Tian didn’t bear any burden in his duty, that he was careless, he often caused delays, and in the face of issues he lacked self-knowledge. When others fellowshiped or pointed his issues out to him, he wouldn’t accept it. Didn’t that all point to him being a false leader, unable to accept the truth or do practical work? If he kept his position as a leader, it would hold up the church’s work—I knew I should let the leaders know about his problems. But then I thought about how the leaders would surely prune and deal with him when they found about all of that, and he’d probably lose his position. If Brother Tian found out I was the one to report him, he’d say I was heartless, that I’d betrayed an old friend. How could I face him after that? This thought left me unsure of what to do. After giving it a lot of thought, I ultimately decided to hold off on reporting him. I’d just exposed his problems—maybe he would reflect and understand his problems, and then repent. He had been a believer for years and he’d been pretty responsible in his duty before. So I decided to keep an eye on things for a few more days, and if he still didn’t change, I could report him then.

After that, we had a potential convert who was of good humanity and was interested in looking into God's work of the last days, but he had to go out of town for work in a few days. We had to get someone to go share the gospel with him as soon as possible. We discussed it and decided to have Brother Tian go. Unexpectedly, however, he mixed up the timing and didn't go the day he was supposed to. I was really angry when I found out about it. I'd warned him plenty of times, but he never changed, and that time he really messed up something important. It occurred to me that I'd known well that Brother Tian had been muddling through his duty for a while, and that he had no sense of responsibility, but I'd just been preoccupied with our relationship. I was afraid of offending him, so I hadn't told the leaders about his problems. That had held up the church's work time and time again. Wasn't I doing evil? I was upset and filled with self-reproach at this thought.

That evening I prayed to God, asking Him to guide me to understand my own problems. I then read this in God's words: **"Most people wish to pursue and practice the truth, but much of the time they merely have a resolution and the desire to do so; they do not possess the life of the truth within them. As a result, when they come across evil forces or encounter wicked and bad people committing evil deeds, or false leaders and antichrists doing things in a way that violates principles—thus causing the work of God's house to suffer losses, and harming God's chosen ones—they lose the courage to stand up and speak out. What does it mean when you have no courage? Does it mean that you are timid or inarticulate? Or is it that you do not understand thoroughly, and therefore do not have the confidence to speak up? It is none of these; it is that you are being controlled by several kinds of corrupt dispositions. One of these dispositions is cunning. You think of**

yourself first, thinking, ‘If I speak up, how will it benefit me? If I speak up and displease someone, how will we get along in the future?’ This is a cunning mentality, right? Is this not the result of a cunning disposition? Another is a selfish and mean disposition. You think, ‘What does a loss to the interests of God’s house have to do with me? Why should I care? It’s got nothing to do with me. Even if I see it and hear it happen, I don’t need to do anything. It’s not my responsibility—I’m not a leader.’ Such things are inside you, as if they had sprung from your unconscious mind, and as if they occupy permanent positions in your heart—they are the corrupt, satanic dispositions of man. These corrupt dispositions control your thoughts and bind your hands and feet, and they control your mouth. When you want to say something in your heart, the words reach your lips but you do not say them, or, if you do speak, your words are roundabout, leaving you with room to maneuver—you do not speak at all clearly. Others feel nothing after hearing you, and what you have said has not resolved the problem. You think to yourself: ‘Well, I spoke up. My conscience is at ease. I’ve fulfilled my responsibility.’ In truth, you know in your heart that you have not said all you should, that what you have said has had no effect, and that the detriment to the work of God’s house remains. You have not fulfilled your responsibility, yet you say overtly that you have fulfilled your responsibility, or that what was happening was unclear to you. Are you not then completely under the control of your corrupt, satanic dispositions?’ (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only Those Who Practice the Truth Are God-Fearing). Every one of God’s words struck me like a lightning bolt, as if I was face-to-face with Him as He judged and exposed me. I felt so guilty. I had seen very clearly that Brother Tian didn’t bear any burden in his duty and it held up the church’s work, but

I'd just played the nice guy so I could protect my relationship with him, turning a blind eye. I'd drummed up some courage to point out his problems, but even then I held back, not daring to talk about the essence and the harmful consequences of his actions. And I fooled myself into thinking that I was putting the truth into practice. I saw the harm a false leader can do to the work of God's house, but for the sake of self-preservation, I didn't expose and report him. I was more willing to offend God than to offend a person. Acting that way made me a minion of Satan, standing on the side of a false leader, wallowing in the mire with him, holding up the church's work. This was disgusting and odious to God. God elevated me, allowing me to take on the duty of a church leader, in the hope that I would fellowship on the truth, resolve brothers' and sisters' issues, and uphold the church's work. But instead, I'd just protected my personal relationships and coddled a false leader while he disrupted the church's work. I saw that I was completely lacking devotion in my duty. Not only had I failed to practice the truth, but I'd committed a transgression. I'd really let down God's painstaking efforts. I finally saw that people pleasers aren't actually good people, but they're selfish and crafty. Realizing this was really upsetting for me, and I felt terrible about myself. I knew I couldn't be a people pleaser anymore, but I had to put the truth into practice and expose Brother Tian for not doing practical work. I had to tell the leaders the truth about his problems and stop covering up for him.

That same night I wrote to the leaders about Brother Tian's performance. I felt so relieved and at peace after I finished my letter, and I felt like I'd finally begun to have a sense of justice, that I wasn't as base and despicable as I had been before. Just as God says: **"If you can fulfill your responsibilities, perform your obligations and duties, set aside your selfish desires, set aside your own intents and motives, have**

consideration for God's will, and put the interests of God and His house first, then after experiencing this for a while, you will feel that this is a good way to live. It is living straightforwardly and honestly, without being a base person or a good-for-nothing, and living justly and honorably rather than being narrow-minded or mean. You will feel that this is how a person should live and act. Gradually, the desire within your heart to gratify your own interests will lessen" (The Word, Vol.

3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Give Your True Heart to God, and You Can Obtain the Truth). When I saw Brother Tian the next day, I fellowshiped with him, dissecting the issues in his duty, and I talked about the nature and consequences of being so careless and perfunctory. After hearing me out, he did acknowledge that he had a problem. Our leaders later determined through his general performance that he didn't do any practical work and that he was a false leader, and he was dismissed. Even though he'd lost his position, I still had an undeniable responsibility in the damage he'd done to the church's work. I swore to myself that I'd never be a people pleaser again, that I wouldn't stand in the way of the church's work anymore.

Soon after, I began working together with Brother Li who had become a church leader. We shared fellowship and discussed any difficulties we encountered in our work. When I was in a bad state, he helped me through fellowship. We got along really well. But after a while, it became clear that Brother Li didn't do practical work in his duty. He just went through the motions in gatherings, but he didn't resolve brothers' and sisters' real-life difficulties. It occurred to me that Brother Li wasn't very responsible, and that I should give him fellowship. A while later, I did bring up this issue with him and exposed the nature and consequences of the way he did his duty.

I noticed that even though some time had passed, Brother Li still hadn't adjusted his attitude toward his duty, and on top of that, he was always in pursuit of name and status. When he didn't achieve anything in his work and couldn't win others' esteem, he'd become negative and pay no mind to the work of the church. I went to fellowship with him again and asked him to reflect and try to understand his motives in his duty. At the time, he acknowledged that his perspective in his pursuit was misguided, but afterward his state didn't change at all. I realized that if he continued on in that duty it would harm the church's work, so I decided to let the leaders know. But as soon as I picked up my pen and got ready to write my letter, I thought, "If the leaders find out about Brother Li's behavior, they'll definitely act according to the principles and dismiss him. Brother Li values his reputation very highly—won't he resent me if he is dismissed? When I started out with my duty, he was always sharing fellowship and helping me, so if I report on his problems now, won't he think I'm being heartless? How could I face him after that?" Then I realized I was about to become a people pleaser again and that I wasn't upholding the work of God's house. I felt somewhat guilty at this, so I quickly said a prayer: "God, I've seen Brother Li's issues and I want to report them, but I'm afraid of displeasing him. I'm well aware of the truth but I'm unable to put it into practice. That's not upholding the work of God's house. Oh God, please guide me to know myself so that I can repent and change."

I read this in God's words after my prayer: **"Satan corrupts people through the education and influence of national governments and of the famous and great. Their devilish words have become man's life nature. 'Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost' is a well-known satanic saying that has been instilled into everyone, and that has become man's life. There are other words of philosophies for**

living that are also like this. Satan uses each nation's fine traditional culture to educate people, causing mankind to fall into and be engulfed by a boundless abyss of destruction, and in the end people are destroyed by God because they serve Satan and resist God. ... There are still many satanic poisons in people's lives, in their conduct and behavior; they possess almost no truth at all. For example, their philosophies for living, their ways of doing things, and their maxims are all filled with the poisons of the great red dragon, and they all come from Satan. Thus, all things that flow through people's bones and blood are all things of Satan. ... Mankind has been profoundly corrupted by Satan. Satan's venom flows through the blood of every person, and it can be seen that man's nature is corrupt, evil, and reactionary, filled by and immersed in the philosophies of Satan—it is, in its entirety, a nature that betrays God. This is why people resist God and stand in opposition to God” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. How to Know Man's Nature).

Through God's words, I was able to understand that my being a people pleaser was rooted in being too selfish, despicable, crooked, and cunning. I always put my own interests first in everything. I lived by satanic laws for survival and perspectives like “Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost,” “Keeping silent on the faults of good friends makes for a long and good friendship,” “Think before you speak and then talk with reservation,” and “Never hit people below the belt.” I kept my mouth shut about other people's problems, no matter who I was dealing with, thinking that would endear me to others, that they'd like me. I protected my interpersonal relationships at every turn; I protected my image in others' eyes. My own motives and adulterations were mixed up in everything I did, as were Satan's cunning schemes. I knew that Brother Tian didn't feel any

responsibility toward his duty and that he disrupted and delayed the church's work over and over, but I still didn't go into detail about his issue or report it to our leaders, afraid of offending him and hoping to preserve the image he had of me. This damaged the church's work. And most recently, I saw that Brother Li was just focused on pursuing name and status in his duty and he didn't take any responsibility toward the church's work. I also knew he didn't have any real understanding of himself, that he wasn't well-suited for that position and I should tell the leaders right away to protect the work of God's house. However, I was worried he'd resent me and that my own interests and reputation would be compromised, so I wanted to take on the role of a people pleaser once again. I realized I was living by satanic life philosophies at every turn, placing my own interests and reputation over everything else without taking the church's work into account at all. I was truly selfish and despicable. I saw all of this happened entirely because I was living as a people pleaser based on satanic life philosophies.

I used to think that getting along harmoniously with everyone and never hurting anyone's feelings made me a good person. But reality showed me that although people pleasers never appear to hurt others, when they see someone living within their corrupt disposition, harmed by Satan and damaging the church's interests, all they care about is protecting their own personal interests and personal relationships. They can't stand on the side of the truth to help and support brothers and sisters, and uphold the church's work. People pleasers may appear to be good people who are fair and understanding, but that's all a façade. Deep in their hearts, they only think of their own self-interest. They even look straight on without a second thought as the church's work is damaged and brothers' and sisters' progress in life is delayed. They seek personal gain at the expense of others. Where's

the humanity in that? It's very clear that they're slippery, deceitful, insidious and despicable hypocrites. I felt so ashamed when I realized this. I'd been enjoying everything that comes from God, but when faced with a problem, I stood on Satan's side as a people pleaser. How was that doing my duty? I was favoring the enemy and biting the hand that fed me. I was one of Satan's stooges, disrupting the church's work, doing evil and resisting God!

This realization was really frightening for me. I came before God in prayer right away: "God, I've done so much evil. I've deserved Your punishment for so long, but You've still given me the chance to do my duty. I'm so grateful for Your mercy. Oh God, I wish to repent. Please guide and lead me so I can find the path of practice."

I then read this in God's words: **"When the truth holds sway in your heart and has become your life, then, when you see something passive, negative, or evil arising, the reaction in your heart is entirely different. First, you feel reproach and a sense of uneasiness, followed immediately by this feeling: 'I can't just remain idle and turn a blind eye. I must stand up and speak, I must stand up and take responsibility.' You can then stand up and put a stop to these evil deeds, exposing them, striving to safeguard the interests of God's house and prevent God's work from being disturbed. Not only will you have this courage and resolve, and will you be capable of understanding the matter completely, but you will also fulfill the responsibility you should bear for God's work and for the interests of His house, and your duty will thereby be fulfilled. How will it be fulfilled? It will be fulfilled through the truth exerting its effect on you and becoming your life"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only Those Who Practice the Truth Are God-Fearing). **"In the church, stand firm in your testimony to Me, uphold the truth; right is right and**

wrong is wrong. Do not confuse black and white. You shall be at war with Satan and must completely vanquish it so that it never rises again. You must give everything you have to protect My testimony. This shall be the goal of your actions—do not forget this” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 41). Reading God’s words helped me understand that in my duty, I have to be considerate of God’s will and always put the church’s interests first. If I discover anything that violates the principles of the truth, I can’t protect my relationships out of sentimentality and safeguard my personal interests, but instead I have to dare to bring negative things to light, to do things in line with the principles, and uphold the work of God’s house. This is the only way to fulfill my duty and my responsibilities. Brother Li was a church leader, so if I saw problems in how he did his duty but didn’t bring them up, not only would that harm the work of God’s house, but it would also be harmful for Brother Li. I knew that no matter what he might think of me or how he might treat me after that, I had to uphold the truth and report his issues. Just as I was getting ready to write that letter, the leaders arranged a gathering for us. In that gathering, I shared everything about Brother Li’s performance. After the leaders verified all of it the next day and confirmed that Brother Li was unable to do practical work, he was relieved of his duty. Doing this left me feeling really at ease and at peace.

I never knew myself before. I was always a people pleaser who lived by satanic philosophies in all things. I protected my own interests, afraid of slipping up and ruining my relationships with others. I kept my mouth shut even when I knew others had acted wrongly. I was unable to uphold the principles of the truth, and I didn’t protect the interests of God’s house. I’d been living without any dignity or integrity. By letting go of my selfish desires, having a heart of reverence for God in my duty, and holding to the

principles and protecting the work of God's house, I now feel utterly at peace. I feel that this is the only way to live with a human likeness. I'm so grateful for God's salvation!

52. Farewell, People-Pleaser!

By Li Fei, Spain

Speaking of people-pleasers, I thought they were great before I believed in God. They had gentle dispositions, never became cross with anyone, everyone liked them, and they never offended anyone. I aspired to be this kind of person. It's because since I was young, I was inundated through my education and by society with things like "Harmoniousness is a treasure; forbearance is brilliance," "When you know something is wrong, it is better to say less," "Sensible people are good at self-protection, seeking only to avoid making mistakes," "Never take anything too seriously," "When ignorance is bliss, it is foolish to be wise," and "Keeping silent on the faults of good friends makes for a long and good friendship." I took these ideas as my own words to live by. It didn't matter if it was family and friends or just acquaintances, I didn't offend anyone, and always went along with what others wanted. Everyone complimented me for being good with people and easy to get along with. I also felt that to survive in this dark, evil society takes forging good relationships with those around you, because that's the only way to establish a place for yourself. It was only later, after I accepted Almighty God's work of the last days, experienced the judgment and chastisement of God's words, and understood some of the truth, that I finally saw that these principles of survival are satanic philosophies, satanic poisons, and not principles people should hold. I saw that living this way, I became more and more crooked, deceitful, selfish, and despicable, that I had no normal human likeness. I finally began to loathe myself, and I repented to God.

In 2018, I was elected as a district leader. At first, I didn't know much about all the church's work. My partner, Sister Liu, had been doing this

duty for over a year, and she understood the various facets of church work, so I asked her about any problems or difficulties I had, and she helped me a lot. Later, I heard Sister Liu mention several times that the leader of a church she was responsible for, Sister Zhang, had just been going through the motions in her duties for a while, not doing practical work, spouting platitudes and doctrines at meetings, and was arrogant, self-righteous, and refused to accept others' suggestions or help. At the time, I thought all these things might be manifestations of a false leader who doesn't do practical work, and since Sister Liu knew about it, I wondered why she didn't make some changes and dismiss Sister Zhang. I wanted to say something to her, but it occurred to me that I had just started performing this duty and I didn't know Sister Zhang very well. If I said something directly, Sister Liu might criticize me for being rash and not treating others lovingly. With this in mind, I shared my thoughts with Sister Liu indirectly, but she didn't make much of it and asked me to help Sister Zhang from a place of love. I thought, "Sister Liu must know the principles for replacing leaders, so if I mention this again, won't she think I'm saying she doesn't do practical work? And she'll definitely think I cause too many problems and I'm hard to get along with. If this causes conflict between us, how will we do our duties as partners in the future?" At that point, I decided not to say anything more.

I fellowshipped with Sister Zhang several times to expose and analyze her issues. She not only refused to accept it, she argued with me. Soon after, some brothers and sisters started reporting that Sister Zhang wasn't doing practical work. That was when I realized Sister Zhang's problem was serious, and if we didn't deal with it in time, it would delay church work and our brothers' and sisters' life entry. So, I raised the matter of dismissing Sister Zhang with Sister Liu again. But Sister Liu said, "These reports have

been turned over to our superiors. Let's wait until they get to the bottom of it before we dismiss her." I thought, "Through the reports and looking into the situation, we can see that Sister Zhang hasn't done practical work, has gone through the motions, and has just talked about platitudes and doctrines for a long time. We already know she's a false leader, so according to principles, she should be dismissed as soon as possible. We are district leaders, and a false leader has appeared in the church, but instead of dealing with it promptly, we're pushing it to our superiors. Isn't this just stalling and allowing a false leader to continue harming our brothers and sisters? This is nothing short of standing with Satan and going against God! This is a very serious problem!" I wanted to speak about it again to Sister Liu, but I thought, "The last time I mentioned this, she didn't want to replace Sister Zhang, and told me to treat her lovingly. It seems that they get along really well, so if I raise the issue of dismissing Sister Zhang again, Sister Liu might say I am too arrogant. Won't she think I am just showing off, as the saying goes 'People new to a job have to prove their mettle'? It'd be better not to say anything. At least our superiors are investigating and checking the facts. A few more days won't hurt." And so, I held back, with the words on the tip of my tongue. A few days later after our superiors investigated the matter, they dealt with us harshly for not promptly handling a false leader, saying we disrupted and disturbed church work and delayed the life entry of our brothers and sisters. They said this was acting as accomplices of Satan and harming our brothers and sisters. Hearing this, I felt miserable. I realized that I hadn't practiced truth that I clearly knew, and I hadn't upheld principles. I really had shielded a false leader. I was covering up for her. So, I lost no time in dismissing her. But afterward, I only felt a little self-reproach and discomfort, and I didn't take the opportunity to reflect on myself any further. I later discovered that Sister Liu always spoke in

platitudes and doctrines at meetings, and that she couldn't resolve brothers' and sisters' problems and difficulties. When I pointed out some of her problems and deficiencies, she refused to accept them, and tried to argue and debate with me. Nothing was achieved in the work she was responsible for, and when our superiors pruned and dealt with her, she refused to accept it. She became negative and slack in her work, mired in complaints and misunderstandings. At the time, I wanted to expose her state, but I realized that as her partner, I was also responsible if we didn't do our work well, and if I analyzed her problems, she'd say I wasn't being understanding, so I didn't dare. Instead, I just tried to console her and encouraged her not to be negative. But after that, I realized Sister Liu still hadn't changed a bit. She had no self-awareness at all! If things continued like this, it would only delay church work and harm our brothers and sisters. I realized I had to report these things to our superiors as soon as possible. The church happened to be doing a general opinion survey, and our superiors asked me to write an appraisal of Sister Liu. I was getting ready to write it, but remembered that most brothers and sisters lacked discernment toward her and really supported her. So, if I stuck my neck out to report on Sister Liu's problems, would they say I was scheming and wanted her removed, so I could have full say over everything? Beyond that, we were partners in our duties, and she had done a lot to help me. If she was really dismissed, wouldn't she hate me? I went back and forth in my mind and finally decided that I would gloss over the details of her not doing practical work or accepting the truth. But after submitting my appraisal, I couldn't quell the unease in my heart. I knew I was concealing the facts and deceiving God, and I felt ever more spiritual darkness. I was always nodding off when I read God's words, and I gained no enlightenment or illumination from fellowship in gatherings. I couldn't discover any of the problems my

brothers and sisters had. I muddled through every day without the slightest energy, and I felt God had abandoned me.

Our superiors later looked into things, and Sister Liu was dismissed as a false leader who didn't do practical work. I felt a great deal of shame and self-reproach at the time, especially when I thought of God's words, **"You will find plenty of good people in society speaking in a very lofty manner, and even though they outwardly seem not to have done any great evil, deep down they are deceitful and slippery. In particular, they are able to see which way the wind blows, and they are smooth and worldly in their eloquence. As I see it, such a 'good person' is a false one, a hypocrite; such a person is merely pretending to be good. All those who stick to a happy medium are the most sinister. They try not to offend anyone, they are people-pleasers, they go along with things, and no one can figure them out. A person like that is a living Satan!"**

(The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only by Putting the Truth Into Practice Can One Cast off the Shackles of a Corrupt Disposition). God's words reveal that people-pleasers are the most sinister and cunning, that they are living Satans. I realized that is what I was. I had known for a while that Sister Liu was a false leader, but to protect my relationship with her and myself, I chose instead to offend God and didn't practice the truth. I had covered up for a false leader again, offended God's disposition, and committed a transgression. I felt that I was finished, that God wouldn't save someone like me. I lived in misery and negativity for a few days. I lost all interest in doing anything. But later, I remembered God's words: **"No matter what wrongs you have committed, no matter how far you have strayed or how seriously you have transgressed, do not let these become burdens or excess baggage that you have to carry with you in your pursuit of understanding God. Continue marching onward. At all times, God**

holds man's salvation in His heart; this never changes. This is the most precious part of the essence of God" (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique VI). I contemplated these words of God over and over, and I felt that each word and line carried mercy and hope for me. Even though my wickedness had offended God's disposition, God still used His words to comfort me, encourage me, and tell me to keep moving onward. I felt immensely grateful, and told myself I could no longer be negative. Wherever I failed, I had to pick myself up from the ground. I should reflect, understand my problems, and seek the truth to resolve them.

I later read another passage of God's words: **"All of you say you are considerate of God's burden and will defend the testimony of the church, but who among you has really been considerate of God's burden? Ask yourself: Are you someone who has shown consideration for His burden? Can you practice righteousness for Him? Can you stand up and speak for Me? Can you steadfastly put the truth into practice? Are you bold enough to fight against all of Satan's deeds? Would you be able to set your emotions aside and expose Satan for the sake of My truth? Can you allow My intentions to be fulfilled in you? Have you offered up your heart in the most crucial of moments? Are you someone who does My will? Ask yourself these questions, and think about them often"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 13). After reading God's words, I felt an agony that pierced my heart. I saw that I was nothing but a slippery, crafty people-pleaser. Faced with an issue, I did everything I could to protect myself and didn't consider the interests of God's house, and I didn't have any sense of responsibility or burden in my duties. I should have promptly handled it when false leaders appeared, but instead, to protect myself and for fear of offending Sister Liu, I was too afraid to practice the truth or expose and

report it. I intentionally concealed the truth, and covered it up to protect her. The result was that every facet of church work was impacted and my brothers and sisters lacked a normal church life. God's house entrusted me with such an important duty, but when false leaders appeared in the church, I betrayed the principles of the truth to protect my own interests, time and again standing with Satan and shielding them. I was well aware church work would suffer, but I didn't practice the truth or uphold righteousness. Whenever I could possibly offend someone, I abandoned the principles of the truth. I was acting selfishly, in my own interest. Wasn't doing things this way disturbing and disrupting the work of God's house and acting as Satan's accomplice? I didn't dare practice the truth or uphold principles; I had no sense of righteousness. How was I fit to be a church leader? I was selfish, despicable, slippery, deceitful, and petty! It especially stung when I considered that God's words say God loathes and despises people-pleasers, and doesn't save them, and the sermons say time and again that God's house resolutely refuses to accept people-pleasers as leaders, because they have evil hearts and can only harm God's house and their brothers and sisters. By shielding and covering up for false leaders, I had already offended God and offended His disposition, so I went before God and prayed to Him: "God, time and again I have violated Your will. I clearly knew the truth but didn't practice it, and harmed the church's work in the process. I am willing to accept Your curses and punishment. No matter how You treat me in the future, I'm willing to obey and repent to You."

I began to wonder why I tried to please people and couldn't practice the truth when things happened to me. What was it that was controlling me? I later read a passage of God's words: **"Satan corrupts people through the education and influence of national governments and of the famous and great. Their devilish words have become man's life nature. 'Every man**

for himself and the devil take the hindmost' is a well-known satanic saying that has been instilled into everyone, and that has become man's life. There are other words of philosophies for living that are also like this. Satan uses each nation's fine traditional culture to educate people, causing mankind to fall into and be engulfed by a boundless abyss of destruction, and in the end people are destroyed by God because they serve Satan and resist God. ... There are still many satanic poisons in people's lives, in their conduct and behavior; they possess almost no truth at all. For example, their philosophies for living, their ways of doing things, and their maxims are all filled with the poisons of the great red dragon, and they all come from Satan. Thus, all things that flow through people's bones and blood are all things of Satan. All of those officials, those who hold power, and those who are accomplished have their own paths and secrets to success. Are such secrets not perfectly representative of their nature? They have done such big things in the world, and no one can see through the schemes and intrigues that lay behind them. This shows just how insidious and venomous their nature is. Mankind has been profoundly corrupted by Satan. Satan's venom flows through the blood of every person, and it can be seen that man's nature is corrupt, evil, and reactionary, filled by and immersed in the philosophies of Satan—it is, in its entirety, a nature that betrays God. This is why people resist God and stand in **opposition to God**” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. How to Know Man's Nature). After reading God's word, I found the root of why I acted like a people-pleaser. It was because since I was young, I had been educated by the Chinese Communist Party, and I was filled with all kinds of worldly philosophies, logic, and rules, such as “Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost,” “Men are not saints; how can they be free from faults?”

“When you know something is wrong, it is better to say less,” “Sensible people are good at self-protection, seeking only to avoid making mistakes,” “Keeping silent on the faults of good friends makes for a long and good friendship,” and so on. These things were implanted deep in my heart, and I lived by them. I became more arrogant, self-righteous, selfish, despicable, slippery, and deceitful all the time. I made these things my life mottos. In getting along with people I carefully observed every word and expression of others, and I handled my relationships with everyone gingerly. I was a people-pleaser, I walked the path of mediocrity, I didn’t offend anyone, I didn’t dare speak the truth or uphold righteousness, and I lived without a shred of dignity. When false leaders appeared in the church, afraid to offend Sister Liu, I abandoned my principles, chose to be a coward, and allowed them to harm my brothers and sisters and obstruct the work of God’s house. How could I call myself a good person? I was black-hearted, a “nice guy,” a despicable slave of Satan. I lacked any sense of courage or righteousness. If I had helped and analyzed Sister Liu earlier, she might not have made so many transgressions, the work of God’s house and the life entry of the brothers and sisters might not have been hindered, and I might not have offended God’s disposition. So then, I finally saw that living by these satanic worldly philosophies and being a people-pleaser could only harm people or ruin them, and do the same to myself. From what the facts revealed, I could finally see that these satanic worldly philosophies, logic, and rules can only deceive and corrupt people. They are in enmity to God’s words and the truth. When we live by these satanic philosophies, no matter how kind, gentle, or agreeable we seem, we are still slippery, deceitful, despicable, and pathetic. If we don’t practice the truth, repent, and change, we will definitely be abandoned and eliminated by God.

I later read more of God's words: **"In essence, God is faithful, and so His words can always be trusted; His actions, furthermore, are faultless and unquestionable, which is why God likes those who are absolutely honest with Him"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Three Admonitions). **"That God asks for people to be honest proves that He truly loathes those who are deceitful, and that He does not like deceitful people. The fact that God does not like deceitful people means that He dislikes their actions, disposition, and motivations; that is, He does not like the way they do things. Therefore, if we are to please God, we must first change our actions and the way in which we exist"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The Most Fundamental Practice of Being an Honest Person). **"Once you have faith, when you come before God but are still living in the same old manner, is your belief in God meaningful? Is it of value? The goals and principles of your life and the way you live have not changed, and the only thing that places you above unbelievers is your acknowledgment of God. You seem to be following God, but your life disposition still has not changed one bit. In the end, you will not be saved. That being the case, is this not but an empty belief and an empty joy?"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only by Putting the Truth Into Practice Can One Cast off the Shackles of a Corrupt Disposition). After reading God's words, I saw that God is faithful in essence. God likes honest people and hates deceivers. When I lived by these satanic philosophies, my views on things and how I conducted myself didn't change at all. I was just like the unbelievers. No matter how many years I believed in God that way, I would never gain the truth or salvation. Only those who practice the truth, who are honest people, who have no deceit in their hearts, who have the courage to uphold the principles of the truth, who have a sense of justice, and who stand on God's side in all things and are considerate of God's will are the

ones He loves, and who can be saved by Him! After understanding what God requires, I prayed to God and swore an oath that I would repent, practice the truth, and be an honest person.

A few months later, I found that my new partner Brother Li always spoke in platitudes and doctrines, and showed off at gatherings. I fellowshiped with him about it several times, but didn't see any improvement, so I told our superiors about it. But then, they asked me to dissect and expose his behaviors, and I began to feel timid. I felt tongue-tied about these things, because Brother Li had been performing his duties there longer than anyone. He was seen as a sort of elder, and he had helped me with my work in the past. If I exposed his state, what would he think of me? Would he be offended? Then, I read this passage of God's words: **"If you have the motivations and perspective of a 'nice person,' you will always fall down and fail in such matters. What, then, should you do in those situations? When faced with such things, you must pray to God. Ask Him to grant you strength and enable you to abide by principle, do what you should do, handle things according to principle, stand your ground, and prevent any harm from coming to the work of God's house. If you are able to forsake your self-interests, reputation, and the standpoint of a 'nice person,' and if you do what you should do with an honest, undivided heart, then you will have defeated Satan, and will have gained this aspect of the truth"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only When You Know Yourself Can You Pursue the Truth). Reading this passage of God's word gave me internal clarity that this had come upon me because God was testing me and giving me an opportunity to repent. God wanted to see how I would handle the matter. I couldn't allow myself to protect my relationships with others as I had before. I had to put church work first, practice the truth, and uphold righteousness. If Brother Li was

someone who pursued the truth, he could use the fellowship and analysis to reflect on and understand himself, which would help his life entry, and then avoid making more transgressions. And so, I went to see Brother Li, and exposed and dissected his states and behaviors one by one using God's words. What surprised me was that he not only didn't resent me, but actually said with repentance, "If you didn't expose and dissect me this way, I would never know about my problems. I really do need to reflect on myself." Hearing Brother Li say those words was very moving for me. I had been worried that exposing him would make him resent me, but that was entirely my own imagination. At that moment, I truly experienced that practicing the truth and being an honest person brings calm and peace of mind, and brings us closer and closer to God. I also genuinely experienced that the only way to protect the work of God's house is to practice the truth and handle things according to principles. This is also the only way to actually help our brothers and sisters. Through God's judgment and chastisement, some of my mistaken views were changed, and my slippery and crafty satanic disposition was changed a bit. Now, when I see my brothers and sisters display corruption, or when things are handled in ways that betray the principles of the truth, I no longer cover them up, shield them, or try to protect my relationships with people. I can consciously practice the truth, fellowship, help, point things out, and expose things. Even though sometimes I still hesitate and am afraid of offending others, I can pray to God, forsake myself, practice according to the principles of the truth, and no longer live by satanic philosophies. With this kind of practice, I feel so much more calm and steadiness. It's very freeing. Achieving these changes and gaining all this was entirely the result of the judgment and chastisement of God's words.

53. Loosening the Ties That Bind

By Cuibai, Italy

God's words say, **"For the sake of your fate, you should seek the approval of God. This is to say, since you acknowledge that you are a member of the house of God, you ought then to bring peace of mind to God and satisfy Him in all things. You must, in other words, be principled in your actions and conform to the truth in them. If this is beyond you, then you shall be detested and rejected by God and spurned by every man. Once you have fallen into such a predicament, you cannot then be counted among the house of God, which is precisely what it is meant by not being approved of by God"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Three Admonitions). From God's words we see what He requires of us: to be principled in our actions and adhere to the truth so we may gain His approval and satisfy Him in all things. I failed to do this before, largely because I was ruled by my emotions, always living by and acting on my feelings. Though it never looked like I was doing any evil, my actions went against the principles of the truth and this hindered the church's work. But after God judged and chastised me with His words, I began to understand the nature and consequences of acting this way. I could then approach things with the right motives instead of relying on emotion, and I could put God's words into practice.

Last November when my duty was as a church leader, there was a poll on how well the group leader of every gathering place was doing. From the responses, I saw that the group leader Sister Li was always careless in her duty and that if any of her faults were pointed out, she would not only refuse to accept the truth, but argued. When others had difficulties, she wouldn't help them by fellowshiping on the truth, but instead would lecture

them in a condescending way and constrain them. ... After reading all this, I knew that based on the principles, she had to be replaced. But we had the same hometown and had worked together in our duties before. We had always been close and she had looked after me a lot. If I dismissed her, would she think I was heartless? A couple of years before she'd been removed from her post as church leader, and she had barely been able to drag herself out of negativity. If another position were taken from her, wouldn't that be an even greater blow? Would she be able to handle it? I figured I needed to fellowship with her right away so she could see how precarious her situation was. I thought if she could turn things around in time, then she might keep her post. So, I reached out to Sister Li in fellowship about her issues but discovered she didn't have any real self-awareness. I gave it everything I had in that fellowship with her, and afterward she became willing to change, to reflect, and I finally breathed a sigh of relief. I thought if I could say a few kind words about her to co-workers, maybe she could keep doing that duty.

Later on while discussing work, a few co-workers said Sister Li never accepted the truth and they all agreed to replace her. Hearing this sent me into turmoil. I thought, "Sister Li has some issues, but she is ready to change, so can't you give her another chance?" Just then Sister Zhou said, "Sister Li has been in this state for a while now. She fellowships well, but she doesn't practice what she says. There's just absolutely no change. She's not well-suited for this post." I rushed to chime in, "Sister Li has a hard time accepting the truth, but she's really proactive and responsible in her duty. Just recently some brothers and sisters had been passive in their duties and she got them motivated." Sister Bai responded immediately, "Sister Li looks like she's always rushing around, being really proactive, but in fact she's doing it all for show, and she can't resolve real issues." What they'd

said was all true, and I could say nothing in response. Another church leader, Sister Zhang, then said, “It’s true that Sister Li is not well-suited to being a group leader, but we don’t have a suitable candidate to replace her just now. Let’s keep her in place until we can find a good replacement.” This was exactly what I wanted, so I rushed to add, “I agree. Let’s replace her when someone else comes along.” To my surprise, less than a week later, Sister Zhou brought the issue up again after we’d finished discussing church work. She said that Brother Chen was a good choice, and a few other co-workers agreed. My heart leapt into my throat. If Brother Chen were selected as a group leader, Sister Li would be dismissed. So I said some things about Brother Chen’s corruptions and deficiencies, and said he wasn’t fit for the job. Everyone then started to falter and I felt a little uneasy, but still didn’t seek the truth.

My leader later asked me to give her a rundown on the group leaders, and when I got to Sister Li, I didn’t accurately reflect the brothers’ and sisters’ assessment of her. I felt vaguely troubled after she left. I wondered why I’d been speaking on Sister Li’s behalf, always worrying about her. Wasn’t I showing her favoritism? What kind of motive was controlling me? I then read these words of God: **“What, primarily, is emotionality? It is a corrupt disposition. If we use a few words to describe the practical aspects of emotionality, they are favoritism and being biased toward protecting certain people, maintaining relationships of the flesh, and not being just; these are what emotionality is. Thus, casting off one’s emotionality does not simply mean no longer thinking about someone. Ordinarily, you might not think about them at all, but then as soon as someone criticizes your family members, your hometown, or anyone with whom you have a relationship, you blow up and are dead set to go to bat for them. You feel absolutely compelled to turn around what has**

been said about them; you cannot allow them to be subjected to an unredressed wrong. You feel a need to do your utmost to uphold their reputation, make everything wrong seem right, and not allow others to tell the truth about them or expose them. This is injustice, and it is called being emotional” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. What Is Truth Reality?). **“If people lack reverence for God, and if God has no place in their hearts, then they can never act on principle no matter what duties they are fulfilling or what problems they are dealing with. People living within their intentions and selfish desires are incapable of entering truth reality. For this reason, whenever they encounter a problem, they do not cast a critical eye over their intentions and cannot recognize where their intentions are erroneous. Instead, they use all kinds of justifications to manufacture lies and excuses for themselves. They do quite a good job of protecting their own interests, reputation, and interpersonal relationships, but they have not, in fact, established any relationship with God”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The Attitude Man Should Have Toward God).

God’s words show how in the face of problems, we can’t act fairly according to the principles of the truth, and we don’t distinguish between right and wrong, favoring and protecting those we’re connected to, or who benefit us. This is acting on emotion. When we are ruled by emotion, whether in our duty or dealing with a problem, we just think about our fleshly feelings and personal interests without practicing the truth or doing our duty well at all. That’s the state I was in. I didn’t want to dismiss Sister Li because I was acting on my emotions. I was protecting our relationship and was afraid she’d be upset with me. So when co-workers wanted to adhere to the principles and replace her, I did everything I could to protect her so she could keep her position. When I gave the leader my assessment

of her, I downplayed it, covered up for her out of favoritism, and used a smokescreen. Looking back, I saw that my motives and intentions were all ruled by emotion. I was living in the corrupt disposition of cunning and deceit, willing to compromise the interests of God's house to protect a relationship, ready to offend God before offending a person. I was totally lacking reverence for God; I was so selfish and despicable! I felt so guilty about all this, so I immediately went to the leader to tell her the truth. Afterward, I prayed and reached out to God: "Why am I always driven by emotion, unable to practice the truth? What is the root of this problem?"

One day in my devotionals, I read these words from God: **"Born into such a filthy land, man has been severely blighted by society, he has been influenced by feudal ethics, and he has been taught at 'institutes of higher learning.' The backward thinking, corrupt morality, mean view on life, despicable philosophy for living, utterly worthless existence, and depraved lifestyle and customs—all of these things have severely intruded upon man's heart, and severely undermined and attacked his conscience. As a result, man is ever more distant from God, and ever more opposed to Him. Man's disposition becomes more vicious by the day, and there is not a single person who will willingly give up anything for God, not a single person who will willingly obey God, nor, moreover, a single person who will willingly seek the appearance of God. Instead, under the domain of Satan, man does nothing but pursue pleasure, giving himself over to the corruption of the flesh in the land of mud. Even when they hear the truth, those who live in darkness give no thought to putting it into practice, nor are they inclined to seek out God even if they have beheld His appearance. How could a mankind so depraved have any chance of salvation? How could a mankind so decadent live in the light?"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and

Work of God. To Have an Unchanged Disposition Is to Be in Enmity to God). I then realized that acting on emotion mostly comes from being misled and corrupted by Satan. Through school education and social influences, the devil Satan steeps people in all sorts of worldly philosophies and laws of survival like “Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost,” “Blood is thicker than water,” and “Man is not inanimate; how can he be free from emotions?” I’ve lived by these philosophies, seeing protecting those close to me as something positive, and seeing sympathy and pity as being loving. As for Sister Li being replaced, I kept thinking we were from the same place and that she always looked after me, so when she was facing being dismissed I thought I should help her and speak for her. I thought that was the right thing to do. I knew she didn’t really carry a burden for her duty as group leader but often lectured others and controlled them. Not replacing her would have harmed the brothers and sisters and impacted the church’s work. But I went against the principles of the truth and disregarded the interests of God’s house, doing all I could to protect her and keep her in her post. I exploited my duty to preserve our relationship and used the church’s work to repay her kindness to me. I was exploiting my power and duty for my own personal gain. As a leader, I should have been thinking of the church’s work and brothers’ and sisters’ life entry, and acting by the principles of the truth in my duty. But I was placing sentiment above all, well aware of the truth, but not practicing it. Wasn’t that betraying the truth and principles, and taking church work lightly? I was biting the hand that feeds me! I then saw that those worldly philosophies are fallacies Satan uses to corrupt and deceive people. Speaking and acting that way is totally devoid of fairness and justice, and there are really no principles of the truth in it. That’s exactly the same life philosophy of the Chinese Communist Party officials: “When a man advances to a greater position, his family and

relatives share in his status.” When someone becomes an official, their relatives far and wide benefit too, and can do practically anything with impunity. A CCP-controlled society is so dark, so evil, totally devoid of fairness or justice. As a church leader, not acting by principles but living by these satanic philosophies, how was I any different from a CCP official? Not wanting to dismiss Sister Li wasn’t out of true love or helpfulness, I was just afraid she’d say I was cold and unfeeling and she would no longer look at me the same way again. I wasn’t considering her life at all. Replacing someone in God’s house is done to encourage self-reflection, so they can repent and change in time. It’s one way that God saves and protects people. I’ve been dismissed from my duty, too, and when I’d learned my lesson from my failure, the church arranged for another suitable duty for me. It was only stumbling and falling that caused me to reflect and allowed me some true self-awareness. I also understood more of God’s will to save man and saw that His love contains both mercy and righteousness. There are principles to God’s love; He doesn’t indulge or spoil us. But my “love” for others was full of satanic worldly philosophies and was based in personal interests. It was narrow and selfish, odious and disgusting to God. Only then did I realize it’s harmful to others and ourselves when we rely on our feelings, and that was my biggest barrier to practicing the truth and doing my duty well. Without accepting the judgment and chastisement of God’s words, without true repentance, I’d have offended God’s disposition and been rejected, detested and eliminated by God.

I later read another passage of God’s words: **“If you want to have a normal relationship with God, then your heart must turn to God. With this as a foundation, you will also have a normal relationship with other people. If you do not have a normal relationship with God, then no matter what you do to maintain your relationships with other people,**

no matter how hard you work or how much energy you exert, it will all just pertain to a human philosophy for living. You are maintaining your position among people through a human perspective and a human philosophy so that people will praise you, but you are not following the word of God to establish normal relationships with people. If you do not focus on your relationships with people but maintain a normal relationship with God, if you are willing to give your heart to God and learn to obey Him, then naturally your relationships with all people will become normal. This way, these relationships are not established in the flesh, but on the foundation of God's love. There are almost no fleshly interactions, but in the spirit there is fellowship, mutual love, mutual comfort, and provision for one another. This is all done on the foundation of a heart that satisfies God. These relationships are not maintained by relying on a human philosophy for living, but are formed very naturally through carrying a burden for God. It does not require man-made effort. You need only practice according to God's word principle" (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. It Is Very Important to Establish a Normal Relationship With God).

After reading God's words I understood that relationships with brothers and sisters are mainly based in God's love. They're not maintained by Satan's worldly philosophies. Practicing the truth is the key. Especially when it comes to the work of God's house, when we see someone doing their duty against the principles of the truth, we have to fellowship on the truth to help and support them. If they still don't repent after a number of fellowships, then they need to be pruned and dealt with when necessary. Even with family and friends, we can't rely on our emotions or abide by worldly philosophies. We have to do things by the principles of God's words: fellowship when necessary and replace them if that doesn't help.

The church's work and the interests of God's house must always be upheld. Only this is in line with God's will. I later discussed this with some co-workers and dismissed Sister Li based on principles of the truth. I also gave fellowship to dissect her performance in light of God's words and promoted Brother Chen to group leader. Only then did I feel at ease in my heart. After a while I read some of God's words to Sister Li and asked how she was doing. She said, "Thanks be to God! All He does is good. At first I felt negative and was suffering, but through reading God's words and praying, I understood God was working this way to change me, and if I hadn't been dismissed and had my problems pointed out, I wouldn't have known myself, nor would I have changed and repented as I have now." Hearing this, I felt how sweet it is to forsake the flesh and practice the truth. I also experienced that only practicing the truth and going by principle is in line with God's will. That is the only dignified way.

54. A Spiritual Battle

By Yang Zhi, USA

Almighty God says, “Since people began to believe in God, they have harbored many incorrect intentions. When you are not putting the truth into practice, you feel that all your intentions are correct, but when something happens to you, you will see that there are many incorrect intentions within you. Thus, when God makes people perfect, He causes them to realize that there are many notions within them that are obstructing their knowledge of God. When you recognize that your intentions are wrong, if you are able to stop practicing according to your notions and intentions, and are able to bear testimony to God, and stand firm in your position in all that happens to you, this proves that you have rebelled against the flesh. When you rebel against the flesh, there will inevitably be a battle within you. Satan will try and make people follow it, will try and make them follow the notions of the flesh and uphold the interests of the flesh—but God’s words will enlighten and illuminate people within, and at this time it is up to you whether you follow God or follow Satan. God asks people to put the truth into practice primarily to deal with the things inside them, to deal with their thoughts and notions that are not after God’s heart. The Holy Spirit touches people in their hearts and enlightens and illuminates them. So behind everything that happens is a battle: Every time people put the truth into practice, or put the love of God into practice, there is a great battle, and though all may seem well with their flesh, in the depths of their hearts a life-and-death battle will, in fact, be going on—and only after this intense battle, after a tremendous amount of reflection, can victory or defeat be decided. One does not know whether to laugh or

cry. Because many of the intentions within people are wrong, or else because much of God's work is at odds with their notions, when people put the truth into practice, a great battle is waged behind the scenes. Having put this truth into practice, behind the scenes, people will have shed countless tears of sadness before finally making up their mind to satisfy God. It is because of this battle that people endure suffering and refinement; this is true suffering. When the battle comes upon you, if you are able to truly stand on the side of God, you will be able to satisfy God" (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Only Loving God Is Truly Believing in God). After reading God's words, I felt deeply that practicing the truth isn't a simple matter at all, and a spiritual battle really is necessary. Several years ago, my sister-in-law was revealed to be an evildoer. The church intended to expel her, but I was constrained by my feelings and unable to practice the truth. In my heart, I struggled back and forth, and was quite miserable. Finally, through the judgment and revelations of God's word, I clearly saw the danger and consequences of acting on my emotions. Only then was I able to forsake my flesh, let go of my feelings, expose and reject the evildoer, and finally enjoy the peace and security brought about by practicing the truth.

It was in 2017 that I returned to take up leadership duties in my local church. At a meeting, my brothers and sisters told me that in the course of her duties as a church leader, Han Bing, my sister-in-law, while fellowshiping at meetings, had endeavored to show off by speaking superficial words and doctrines. Everywhere she had gone, she had talked about what duties she had performed and how she had suffered, which made others worship and listen to her. After the brothers and sisters had spoken to her about some issues that existed in their duties, she had not fellowshiped on the truth to resolve these problems, but had lectured others

condescendingly. Her lectures had caused some of the brothers and sisters to live in a state of negativity and lose all interest in their duties. Later, Han Bing had been replaced. After that, she had refused to reflect and come to understand herself, and she still had caused provocations and strife among brothers and sisters, disrupting church life. The church leaders had fellowshiped with her several times, and also dealt with her and criticized her, but she had refused to accept any of it. She had remained disobedient and dissatisfied, and continued to spread negativity, causing severe disruption to church life. ... When I heard Han Bing had been behaving this way, I was furious. I recalled God's words: **"Those who give vent to their poisonous, malicious talk within the church, who spread rumors, foment disharmony, and form cliques among the brothers and sisters—they should have been expelled from the church. Yet because now is a different era of God's work, these people are restricted, for they face certain elimination. All who have been corrupted by Satan have corrupt dispositions. Some have nothing more than corrupt dispositions, while others are different: Not only do they have corrupt satanic dispositions, but their nature is also extremely malicious. Not only do their words and actions reveal their corrupt, satanic dispositions; these people are, moreover, the genuine devil Satan. Their behavior interrupts and disturbs God's work, it impairs the brothers' and sisters' entry into life, and it damages the normal life of the church. Sooner or later, these wolves in sheep's clothing must be cleared out; an unsparing attitude, an attitude of rejection, should be adopted toward these lackeys of Satan. Only this is standing on the side of God, and those who fail to do so are wallowing in the mire with Satan"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. A Warning to Those Who Do Not Practice the Truth). When I remembered this passage of God's words, I understood clearly that

when measured by God's words, Han Bing's nature and essence were indeed those of an evildoer. The church leaders and co-workers analyzed her behavior against God's words, and said that even though she could make sacrifices and expend herself, and was capable of suffering and paying a price while fulfilling her duties, she was arrogant and self-important, didn't accept the truth at all, was arbitrary and rash, disturbed church life, and refused to correct her mistakes even after being told to. This made her an evildoer. According to the regulations of the work arrangements of God's house, such people must be expelled. After hearing so many brothers and sisters say that she should be expelled from the church, I felt very conflicted: From looking at her behaviors, I could see that she really was an evildoer, and should be expelled, but she was my wife's younger sister, and my parents-in-law treated me well and cared very much for my family. If they learned I had voted to expel Han Bing, then wouldn't they think I was merciless, ungrateful, and unappreciative of family? How would I be able to face my in-laws after doing such a thing? But as a church leader, if I didn't act according to principles, knowing full well that there was an evildoer in the church yet not expelling her, and if I continued to allow this evildoer to disrupt church life and harm God's chosen people, wouldn't that make me an evildoer's accomplice and an enemy of God? I was afraid to think about it further. At the time, I felt trapped between a rock and a hard place. I didn't know what to do. Sister Zhou saw that I looked troubled, and said to me, "Brother Yang, Han Bing has disrupted church life time and time again, and she doesn't show the slightest sign of repentance. Based on principle, she should be expelled from the church. This is protecting the work of the church. That is the most important thing! We need to consider God's will, and not act on our own

emotions and personal feelings.” After listening to her, I felt even more conflicted.

Just then, some of the brothers and sisters advised, “Han Bing has believed in God for so many years, she has forsaken her family and career to fulfill her duties, and she has suffered much. We think she should be given another chance to repent.” When I heard those words, I knew clearly that these brothers and sisters only said that because they had been deceived by Han Bing’s outward appearance of doing good deeds, and that I should fellowship on the truth with them to analyze Han Bing’s behavior so that they could discern her nature and essence. But then I thought, Han Bing is the favorite daughter of my parents-in-law, my mother-in-law is muddle-headed in her belief in God, and has no discernment, and my wife is overly emotional. If I decided to expel Han Bing and expose and analyze her evil behavior to my brothers and sisters, then wouldn’t I be blatantly offending my wife’s entire family? If I said a few good words about Han Bing in front of the brothers and sisters, and then fellowshiped with her to ask her to repent and not cause any further disturbances, then there’s a chance she might not need to be expelled from the church, and that way, I wouldn’t have to offend my wife’s family. This idea alleviated some of the anxiety I was feeling, so I said to my brothers and sisters, “Han Bing has indeed done evil deeds and committed transgressions, but it is God’s will to save people to the greatest extent possible, so we should give her another chance to repent. If she does evil again, it won’t be too late to expel her then, and we can get her to accept it wholeheartedly.” When Sister Zhou heard me say these specious words, she seemed to want to say something, but in the end she stayed silent. No one else said anything more either, and I felt some of the tension in my heart ease. I thought to myself that I finally didn’t need to worry anymore about offending my parents-in-law. But two days later, I

suddenly developed mouth ulcers—three of them. My mouth felt like it was on fire; it burned like crazy. Sometimes it was so painful that I was unable to speak or eat, and the pain got so bad it even woke me up at night. In the midst of my agony, I prayed to God: “God, I know that these excruciating ulcers in my mouth and on my tongue did not simply develop by coincidence; this is Your chastening and discipline of me. O God! I wish to repent to You.”

Later, during my devotionals, I saw this passage of God’s words: **“People who genuinely believe in God always have Him in their hearts, and they always carry within them a God-revering heart, a God-loving heart. Those who believe in God should do things cautiously and prudently, and all that they do should be in accordance with God’s requirements and able to satisfy His heart. They should not be headstrong, doing whatever they please; that does not befit saintly propriety. People must not run amok, waving the flag of God all over the place while swaggering and swindling everywhere; this is the most rebellious sort of conduct. Families have their rules, and nations have their laws—and isn’t it even more so in the house of God? Aren’t the standards even stricter? Aren’t there even more administrative decrees? People are free to do what they want, but the administrative decrees of God cannot be altered at will. God is a God who does not tolerate offense from humans; He is a God who puts people to death. Do people really not know this already?”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. A Warning to Those Who Do Not Practice the Truth). God’s words left me shaking with fear. I saw that His disposition is holy, righteous, and brooks no offense. In God’s house, Christ and the truth hold power. God’s attitude toward evildoers who disrupt and disturb church work is loathing and disgust. And for those who have discernment but continue to stand on the

side of evildoers and speak on their behalf, God's attitude is extreme disgust and fury. Han Bing, as someone who refused to practice the truth, who caused provocations and strife, and who disrupted and disturbed church work, was precisely the kind of evildoer revealed by God's work, and was one who ought to be expelled. But to protect my relationship with my wife's family, I blatantly went against my conscience by selling out the principles of the truth. I shielded and made excuses for an evildoer. I stood by an evildoer's side, and acted to protect her. Didn't this make me the helper and accomplice of an evildoer? God honored me by giving me a leadership duty, but I had no reverence for Him at all. I clearly understood the truth, yet didn't practice it, instead engaging in a deliberate deception to keep an evildoer in the church, where she had disrupted church life and done harm to my brothers and sisters. I was knowingly and deliberately offending God's disposition! My actions might deceive other people, but they couldn't deceive God. God sees what is in our hearts. How could He ever tolerate someone like me, who had acted with such arbitrary rashness? I had already committed a transgression, and I knew that if I didn't repent, God would eliminate me. So I hurriedly prayed to God to repent. After discussing it with several of my co-workers, we compiled a list of Han Bing's evil deeds and applied to have her expelled from the church. After I found the will to turn back in God's direction, the ulcers in my mouth mysteriously healed.

Two days later, I went to my mother-in-law's house to do something, and Han Bing was there. When she saw me, she gave me a hard look and then turned and left. My mother-in-law said to me angrily, "Your sister-in-law has believed in God for so many years, and suffered so much to spread the gospel. What person doesn't have a corrupt disposition? If the church expels her, won't she then lose the chance to gain God's salvation? You

can't be so heartless toward her!" My wife also chimed in to speak on Han Bing's behalf. Seeing how emotional they were, and that they had little discernment toward Han Bing, I fellowshipped with them about her wicked behavior. But my mother-in-law didn't listen at all. Instead, she shouted furiously at me as tears streamed from her eyes. Seeing her anger, my wife, too, stood there rebuking me. Seeing all this, I felt so weak and miserable I couldn't even eat. That night, as I lay in bed, I tossed and turned, unable to fall asleep no matter how hard I tried. On the one hand, I had to expel the evildoer to protect the church's work, but on the other hand, there were the accusations of my wife and mother-in-law. What was I to do? If I expelled my sister-in-law, I would offend my mother-in-law's entire family, which could affect my relationship with my wife and possibly lead to the breakup of my own family. But allowing this evildoer to remain in the church could pose a danger to church life and do harm to the lives of my brothers and sisters. Thinking of all this left me feeling very miserable and conflicted. All I could do was to pray to God in earnest: "God, I feel very weak. With regard to expelling Han Bing, I don't wish to offend You, but I am constrained by my emotions and having trouble putting the truth into practice. I beg You to give me strength and guide me to overcome the forces of darkness, so that I may stand firm and testify for You."

After I prayed, I read some more of God's words: **"In every step of work that God does within people, externally it appears to be interactions between people, as if born of human arrangements or from human interference. But behind the scenes, every step of work, and everything that happens, is a wager made by Satan before God, and requires people to stand firm in their testimony to God. Take when Job was tried, for example: Behind the scenes, Satan was making a bet with God, and what happened to Job was the deeds of men and the**

interference of men” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Only Loving God Is Truly Believing in God). **“All of you say you are considerate of God’s burden and will defend the testimony of the church, but who among you has really been considerate of God’s burden? Ask yourself: Are you someone who has shown consideration for His burden? Can you practice righteousness for Him? Can you stand up and speak for Me? Can you steadfastly put the truth into practice? Are you bold enough to fight against all of Satan’s deeds? Would you be able to set your emotions aside and expose Satan for the sake of My truth? Can you allow My intentions to be fulfilled in you? Have you offered up your heart in the most crucial of moments? Are you someone who does My will? Ask yourself these questions, and think about them often”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 13).

Every reproachful question of God’s words pierced my heart. I felt in them His urgent will and requirements. God hoped that I would handle the matter of expelling the evildoer without relying on my emotions or personal feelings, and that I would unwaveringly stand on God’s side and practice the truth to satisfy His will. I thought of Job during his trials, and how, while on the surface his wealth was stripped away, his children died, his servants were killed, and his wife and three friends attacked him, behind all of these events was Satan’s wager with God. They were Satan’s temptations befalling Job. Finally, Job was able to stand on God’s side because of his faith and reverence of God. He made Satan suffer absolute humiliation and failure, and he gave strong, resounding testimony for God. What outwardly seemed to be pressure placed upon me by my mother-in-law was, in fact, a battle in the spiritual realm. It was Satan’s trickery. It was its attempt to stop me from practicing the truth by taking advantage of my emotional attachments, so that the evildoer could remain and continue to disrupt and

destroy the church's work. But God was also using this matter to test me, to see if I would submit to Satan due to the constraints of my wife and mother-in-law, or if I would instead uphold righteousness, practice the truth, and act according to principles. If I chose to satisfy my flesh and stand on Satan's side, wouldn't that mean I had fallen for Satan's trickery? If I did that, I would lose testimony in God's presence.

When I thought of all that, I began to reflect on myself: In all this time, while faced with this choice, why had I felt trapped between a rock and a hard place and found it so miserable? I clearly understood the need to protect the church's work, but why did I continue to act on my feelings, and find it hard to practice the truth and act in accordance with principles? Afterward, I read this passage of God's words, **"Born into such a filthy land, man has been severely blighted by society, he has been influenced by feudal ethics, and he has been taught at 'institutes of higher learning.' The backward thinking, corrupt morality, mean view on life, despicable philosophy for living, utterly worthless existence, and depraved lifestyle and customs—all of these things have severely intruded upon man's heart, and severely undermined and attacked his conscience. As a result, man is ever more distant from God, and ever more opposed to Him. Man's disposition becomes more vicious by the day, and there is not a single person who will willingly give up anything for God, not a single person who will willingly obey God, nor, moreover, a single person who will willingly seek the appearance of God. Instead, under the domain of Satan, man does nothing but pursue pleasure, giving himself over to the corruption of the flesh in the land of mud"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. To Have an Unchanged Disposition Is to Be in Enmity to God). From God's word, I came to understand that I was living inside my emotions, unable to practice the truth and in a state of

rebellion and resistance to God, all because I had been corrupted by Satan. Satan, the king of devils, used social indoctrination and the education I received at school to implant satanic philosophies like “Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost,” “Blood is thicker than water,” and “Man is not inanimate; how can he be free from emotions?” in me to make me view my feelings for other people as the most important thing in life, to make me think that safeguarding relationships and being sensitive to people’s feelings is how people are, and to make me believe that not doing so would be heartless and faithless, and that I would be blamed by others for it. I treated these satanic philosophies as positive things, and considered them principles to live by, and in living out my life according to these satanic philosophies and laws, I became unprincipled and confused about right and wrong, extremely selfish, despicable, cunning, and deceitful. In the matter of expelling Han Bing, I feared that my relatives would say I was ungrateful and heartless, and that it would break up my family; this made me disregard the work of the church and the lives of my brothers and sisters. I really was selfish and despicable. Behaving this way, I was truly ungrateful and heartless. The reason why our society is so dark and evil, and why there is no fairness or justice is that people all live their lives according to these satanic philosophies and laws. People are only concerned about fleshly emotional relationships. They only speak for those to whom they are closest. Even when these people do something illegal or commit a crime, they think of ways to protect and aid them, and confuse right and wrong in an effort to speak for them. It was only then that I saw clearly that these satanic philosophies and laws appear to be reasonable and moral and to accord with human notions, but they are actually absurd fallacies that Satan uses to deceive and corrupt people. They are in enmity with the truth and with God. When we live by these things, we can only rebel against and

resist God, harm others, and live out the nature of demons. In the past, I had lived according to such satanic philosophies and laws, protected the evildoer, and had a share in her wrongdoings. But God didn't hold my past transgressions against me, and still gave me a chance to repent, for which I am very grateful to God. So, I silently prayed to God and swore an oath: God, I no longer wish to act on my own emotions. I wish only to love what You love and hate what You hate according to Your words, to uphold the principles of the truth, and to promptly expel evildoers from the church.

The next day, at the co-worker meeting, I heard from co-workers that Han Bing still hadn't come to understand herself or shown any repentance, and that she was still causing provocations, fomenting dissent, and attempting to form cliques. When I heard this, I blamed myself even more. I hated myself for having acted on my emotions and not having expelled her in time, allowing her to disrupt church life. Later on, during the next meeting, I began to conscientiously use God's words to analyze and discern each of Han Bing's evil behaviors, and through fellowship, the brothers and sisters who had been deceived by her also developed discernment and began to reject her. My wife, after gaining an understanding of the truth, also came to develop discernment of Han Bing's nature and essence, and no longer argued that she had been treated unfairly. After Han Bing was expelled from the church, it was no longer being disrupted by an evildoer, so the brothers and sisters were able to attend meetings and perform their duties normally again. We all praised God for His righteousness! This incident made me see that in God's house, His words and the truth hold power, that all things are handled according to the principles of the truth, and that nonbelievers, evildoers, and antichrists can't maintain themselves in God's house. I also personally experienced that living by satanic philosophies and laws can only bring us pain. It brings no benefit to us, or

to anyone else. Only through living by God's words can we ever truly feel safe and at peace. That today I no longer live by satanic philosophies and laws, and that I've broken through the constraints of my emotions, am able to practice some truth, and can live with a bit of righteousness—all of this is thanks to God's salvation, and is entirely an effect achieved by the judgment and chastisement in God's words. Thanks be to Almighty God!

55. Breaking Free From the Shackles of Bondage

By Zhou Yuan, China

Almighty God says, **“Now is the time when I determine the ending for each person, not the stage in which I began to work man. I write down in My record book, one by one, the words and actions of each person, the path by which they have followed Me, their inherent characteristics, and how they have ultimately comported themselves. In this way, no matter what kind of person they are, no one shall escape My hand, and all shall be with their own kind as I assign”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Prepare Sufficient Good Deeds for Your Destination). **“Everyone’s outcome is determined according to the essence that comes from their conduct, and it is always determined appropriately. No one can bear the sins of another; even more so, no one can receive punishment in another’s stead. This is absolute. A parent’s doting care for their children does not indicate that they can perform righteous deeds in their children’s stead, nor does the dutiful affection of a child to their parents mean that they can perform righteous deeds in their parents’ stead. This is what is truly meant by the words, ‘Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left.’ People cannot take their evildoing children into rest on the basis of their deep love for them, nor can anyone take their wife (or husband) into rest on the basis of their own righteous conduct. This is an administrative rule; there can be no exceptions for anyone. In the end, doers of righteousness are doers of righteousness, and evildoers are evildoers. The righteous will eventually be allowed to survive, while the evildoers will be destroyed. The holy are holy; they are not filthy.**

The filthy are filthy, and not one part of them is holy. The people who will be destroyed are all the wicked ones, and the ones who will survive are all the righteous—even if the children of the wicked ones perform righteous deeds, and even if the parents of the righteous ones commit evil deeds. There is no relationship between a believing husband and an unbelieving wife, and there is no relationship between believing children and unbelieving parents; these two types of people are completely incompatible. Prior to entering into rest, one has physical relatives, but once one has entered into rest, one will no longer have any physical relatives to speak of” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God and Man Will Enter Into Rest Together). God’s words tell us that His work in the last days is to sort people according to their kind. He determines every person’s outcome and destination based on their behavior, and their nature and essence. It’s something no one can change, and it’s determined by God’s righteous disposition. God requires us to treat others in line with His words and the principles of the truth. We can’t protect or favor anyone based on emotion, not even our loved ones. That would be contrary to the truth and an offense to God’s disposition.

Once, about three years ago, as a gathering was wrapping up, a leader told me: “Your dad is always creating conflict among brothers and sisters, disrupting church life. We’ve fellowshiped with him, dissected this, and warned him, but he’s unrepentant. Brothers and sisters have reported that he’s done the same thing in his duty in other places before. We’re going to gather facts about his evil deeds.” My heart skipped a beat when I heard this and I wondered, “Is it really that bad?” But then I thought about how, in gatherings with my dad, he really was disruptive to church life and wouldn’t accept the truth. In gatherings he wouldn’t fellowship on God’s words, but always talked about things unrelated to the truth, stirring people

up so they couldn't calmly ponder God's words. I mentioned this to him but he wouldn't listen at all. He just had a mountain of excuses to throw back at me. I told the church leader about the situation, who then fellowshiped with my dad, helped him a number of times, and explained the essence and consequences of his behavior. But my dad refused to accept it. He just kept on making excuses and arguing. He wasn't repentant at all. It must have gotten worse since the brothers and sisters were reporting this now. I remembered there had been a couple of people in the church who were deemed to be evil and were expelled because they wouldn't practice the truth, but always disrupted church life, and wouldn't repent. If my dad really was that way, wouldn't he be kicked out too? If that really did happen, his path of faith would be at an end. Would he still have a chance at salvation? My panic grew as I thought about it, and I felt like my heart was tied up in knots.

That night I tossed and turned, unable to sleep, thinking about what the others had said about my dad. I knew they were just trying to protect church life from disruptions, out of consideration for brothers' and sisters' life entry, and it was in line with God's will. I knew about my dad's behavior and wondered whether I should tell the leader about it. I thought about how loving my dad had been when I was little. Whenever my brother and I fought, he'd protect me whether or not I was in the wrong; when it was cold and I didn't have warm bedding at school, he'd ride his bike more than 60 miles to bring me a quilt. My mom was away from home doing her duty a lot, so my dad was usually the one to cook for me and take care of me. As I kept thinking about it, I couldn't hold my tears back. I thought, "My dad was the one who raised me. If I expose him and he finds out about it, wouldn't he say I have no conscience, that I'm heartless? How could I face him at home after that?" I reluctantly began to write some things about my

dad's behavior, but I couldn't go on. I was thinking, "What if I write everything I know and he gets kicked out? Forget it. I shouldn't write this." I wanted to have a nice, deep sleep to take me away from reality, but I couldn't sleep a wink. I felt uneasy and guilty. His behavior really hadn't been great recently, and I knew a bit about his past actions. If I kept it to myself, wouldn't I be hiding the truth? It was a real internal conflict for me. I had to come before God in prayer. I prayed, "Oh God, I know about some of the evil my dad has done, and I know I have to uphold the church's work and be truthful about what I know, but I don't want to do that as I'm afraid he'll be expelled. God, please guide me so that I can practice the truth, be an honest person, and uphold the church's work." I felt a little calmer after this prayer. I then read these words of God: **"All of you say you are considerate of God's burden and will defend the testimony of the church, but who among you has really been considerate of God's burden? Ask yourself: Are you someone who has shown consideration for His burden? Can you practice righteousness for Him? Can you stand up and speak for Me? Can you steadfastly put the truth into practice? Are you bold enough to fight against all of Satan's deeds? Would you be able to set your emotions aside and expose Satan for the sake of My truth? Can you allow My intentions to be fulfilled in you? Have you offered up your heart in the most crucial of moments? Are you someone who does My will? Ask yourself these questions, and think about them often"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 13). **"People all live in emotion—and so God does not avoid a single one of them, and exposes the secrets hidden in the hearts of all mankind. Why is it so hard for people to separate themselves from emotion? Does doing so surpass the standards of conscience? Can conscience accomplish God's will? Can emotion help**

people through adversity? In God's eyes, emotion is His enemy—has this not been clearly stated in God's words?" (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Interpretations of the Mysteries of "God's Words to the Entire Universe", Chapter 28). I had no answers to these questions in God's words. I well knew that my dad didn't pursue the truth, and that he disrupted gatherings and others' eating and drinking of God's words. He didn't listen to anyone's fellowship, he was prejudiced against others, judged people behind their backs, and sowed discord. But constrained by emotion, I failed to heed how my brothers' and sisters' life entry was being disrupted. I just didn't want to be up front with the leader to protect and shield him. I wasn't putting the truth into practice or being considerate of God's will. I thought about the two evil people the church had expelled before. Seeing them refusing to practice the truth and disrupting church life had filled me with anger, and I exposed them justly and severely. So why couldn't I be truthful when it came time to write about my father's behavior? I saw that I wasn't an honest person, that I was lacking a sense of justice. I wasn't practicing the truth or upholding the church's work at this critical moment. Instead I was shielding my dad out of emotion, covering up his evils and going against the principles of the truth. Wasn't that standing on Satan's side and being an enemy to God? Realizing this, I prayed and repented to God. "I don't want to act on my emotions anymore. I want to be honest about my dad."

After my prayer, I thought back over some of his evil deeds and listed them all out, one by one. While serving as a gospel deacon, he became prejudiced against his work partner, Brother Zhang. He judged and discriminated against him in front of other brothers and sisters, leaving Brother Zhang stressed and in a negative state. The leader pruned and dealt with my dad, but he wouldn't listen. When brothers and sisters pointed out his issues, he wouldn't accept any of them. He always focused on others'

failings and exploited their weaknesses and he always said, “I’ve been a believer all these years. I understand it all!” When he saw me actively engaging in my duty, he urged me to seek money and worldly things, and always said negative things to dampen my enthusiasm for my duty. One time after he was involved in a car accident, Brother Lin from the church went to check on him and fellowship on the truth, saying he had to reflect on himself and learn his lesson, but he was having none of it. He distorted the facts, and spread a rumor that Brother Lin had come to mock him. That made some brothers and sisters prejudiced against Brother Lin. Thinking through all of this really took me aback and angered me. I wondered, “Is this really my dad? Isn’t this an evil person?” I’d always thought through all his years of faith he’d been doing his duty and spreading the gospel, that he could suffer and pay a price. I’d been taken in by how he seemed on the outside, thinking he was a true believer. I never tried to discern his behavior. I was so foolish and blind. I now felt self-reproach for having been ruled by emotion, coddling and shielding him. I then read this in God’s words: **“Those who give vent to their poisonous, malicious talk within the church, who spread rumors, foment disharmony, and form cliques among the brothers and sisters—they should have been expelled from the church. Yet because now is a different era of God’s work, these people are restricted, for they face certain elimination. All who have been corrupted by Satan have corrupt dispositions. Some have nothing more than corrupt dispositions, while others are different: Not only do they have corrupt satanic dispositions, but their nature is also extremely malicious. Not only do their words and actions reveal their corrupt, satanic dispositions; these people are, moreover, the genuine devil Satan. Their behavior interrupts and disturbs God’s work, it impairs the brothers’ and sisters’ entry into life, and it damages the**

normal life of the church. Sooner or later, these wolves in sheep's clothing must be cleared out; an unsparing attitude, an attitude of rejection, should be adopted toward these lackeys of Satan. Only this is standing on the side of God, and those who fail to do so are wallowing in the mire with Satan" (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. A Warning to Those Who Do Not Practice the Truth). Holding my dad's behavior up against God's words, I saw this wasn't just a corrupt disposition he was showing, but a malicious nature. He was enthusiastic on the surface and could suffer for his duty, and he could carry on spreading the gospel in the face of the Chinese Communist Party's persecution, but he couldn't accept the truth. He even hated the truth. His actions revealed his cunning, vicious nature. He was in essence an evil man who was of Satan, and he should be expelled. Although I was his daughter, I couldn't go by my own feelings. I had to stand on God's side in my faith, and expose and forsake Satan. I thought of the brothers and sisters in the group I was in charge of who had no discernment about him. I had to fellowship with them and expose my dad's wickedness so they wouldn't be fooled by him anymore. But then I became worried: "Some of them were brought into the faith by him and are on good terms with him. If I expose him, won't they say I don't have a conscience, that I'm heartless? And if he's kicked out and he loses his chance at salvation, that will be so painful for him." This thought was really upsetting, and I lost my desire to share that fellowship. I lay in bed sleepless that night, thinking that if I didn't expose my dad's wickedness and brothers and sisters were deceived and stood on his side, then they would be sharing in his evil. If I saw them being misled but didn't fellowship with them, wouldn't I be harming them? At that thought I felt some self-reproach, so I said a prayer to God: "Oh God, I have so many worries now. Please give me

faith and strength, guide me and lead me to practice the truth and expose this evil person.”

After I'd prayed, I read this passage of God's words: **“In God's words, what principle is mentioned with regard to how people should treat each other? Love what God loves, and hate what God hates. That is, the people God loves, who truly pursue the truth and do God's will, are the very ones you should love. Those who do not do God's will, who hate God, who disobey Him, and whom He despises are ones we, too, should despise and reject. This is what God's word requires. If your parents do not believe in God, then they hate Him; and if they hate Him, then God certainly loathes them. So, if you were told to hate your parents, could you do it? If they resist God and revile Him, then they are certainly people He hates and curses. Under such circumstances, how should you treat your parents if either they obstruct your believing in God, or if they do not? During the Age of Grace, the Lord Jesus said, ‘Who is My mother? And who are My brothers? ... For whoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, the same is My brother, and sister, and mother.’ This saying already existed back in the Age of Grace, and now God's words are even more apt: ‘Love what God loves, and hate what God hates.’ These words cut straight to the point, yet people are often unable to appreciate their true meaning. If a person is cursed by God, but from all outward appearances seems to be quite good, or is a parent or relative of yours, then you might find yourself unable to hate that person, and there might even be a good deal of intimacy and a close relationship between you. When you hear such words from God, you get upset and are unable to harden your heart toward or abandon such a person. This is because there is a traditional notion here that is binding you. You think that if you do this, you will**

incur the wrath of Heaven, be punished by Heaven, and even be cast aside by society and condemned in the court of public opinion. Furthermore, an even more pragmatic problem is that it will be on your conscience. This conscience comes from what your parents taught you from childhood, or from the influence and infection of social culture, either of which has planted such a root and way of thinking inside you that you cannot practice God's word and love what He loves and hate what He hates. However, deep down, you know that you should hate them and reject them, for your life came from God, and was not given by your parents. Man ought to worship God and return himself to Him. Even though you say and think that, you simply cannot come around and are simply unable to put it into practice. Do you know what is going on here? It is that these things have bound you, tightly and profoundly. Satan uses these things to bind your thoughts, your mind, and your heart so that you cannot accept God's words. Such things have filled you up completely, to the point that you have no room for God's words. Moreover, if you try to put His words into practice, then those things will take effect inside you and make you controvert His words and requirements, thus making you unable to extricate yourself from these knots and unable to break free from this bondage. It will be hopeless, and, without the strength to struggle, you will give up after a while" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days.

Only by Recognizing Your Misguided Views Can You Know Yourself). I then understood that the principle God requires us to have in dealing with others must be to love what He loves and hate what He hates. People who love the truth and can do God's will are those we should treat with love, while evil people who hate the truth and resist God are the ones we should hate. Only this practice is in line with God's will. But I was always constrained by emotion

when it came to my dad. I protected and covered for him. I wasn't able to love what God loves and hate what God hates. It was because the old satanic notions of "Blood is thicker than water" and "Man is not inanimate; how can he be free from emotions?" had a hold over my heart. I couldn't distinguish good from evil, thinking that exposing my dad's evil behavior would be outrageous, unconscionable. I was afraid of being criticized and condemned by others. To protect a family relationship of the flesh, I failed to uphold the truth and expose an evil person, heedless of the work of God's house and brothers' and sisters' life entry. That's what was truly unconscionable and lacking in humanity. I saw these old satanic notions were stopping me from practicing the truth, making me stand on Satan's side and resist God, in spite of myself. In fact, God has never said that we should be conscionable in our dealings with demons and evil people, nor has He said that rejecting loved ones who belong to Satan is immoral. In the Age of Law, Job's unbelieving children died in a calamity, but Job didn't complain against God for the death of his children out of emotion. On the contrary, he praised God's name. In the Age of Grace, Peter's parents stifled and stood in the way of his faith, so he forsook them and left home, giving up everything to follow God, thereby gaining God's praise. Thinking over Job's and Peter's experiences, I gained some understanding about God's requirement to love what He loves and hate what He hates.

I then read more of God's words: **"Who is Satan, who are demons, and who are God's enemies if not resisters who do not believe in God? Are they not those people who are disobedient to God? Are they not those who claim to have faith, yet who lack truth? Are they not those who merely seek to obtain blessings while being unable to bear witness for God? You still mingle with those demons today and bear conscience and love toward them, but in this case are you not extending good**

intentions toward Satan? Are you not associating with demons? If people these days are still unable to distinguish between good and evil, and continue to blindly be loving and merciful without any intention of seeking God's will or being able in any way to harbor God's intentions as their own, then their endings will be all the more wretched. ... If you are compatible with those which I detest and with which I disagree, and still bear love or personal feelings toward them, then are you not disobedient? Are you not intentionally resisting God? Does such a person possess truth? If people bear conscience toward enemies, love for demons, and mercy for Satan, then are they not intentionally disrupting God's work?" (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God and Man Will Enter Into Rest Together). Reading this left me feeling so distressed and guilty. I knew that my dad hated the truth and had always been disruptive to church life, and that his nature and essence were evil, but I kept being conscionable and loving toward him, even covering up for him and shielding him. Wasn't that exactly what God meant by **"extending good intentions toward Satan"** and **"associating with demons"**? Wasn't I brazenly opposing God and disrupting the church's work? In God's house, the truth and righteousness rule. All the evil forces of Satan, including all evil people and antichrists, cannot remain. They must be exposed and eliminated by God, and purged from the church. This is determined by God's righteous disposition. But I had been covering up for an evil person, trying to let him stay in God's house. Wasn't I tolerating an evil person's disruptions of church life? Wasn't I aiding an evil enemy and opposing God? Going on like that would mean being punished by God alongside the evil man. This realization scared me a bit. I saw that God's righteous disposition tolerates no offense and covering for an evildoer out of personal feelings is so dangerous! I could no longer speak and act based on my

feelings. Even though he was my dad, I had to practice the truth, love what God loves, hate what God hates, and uphold the interests of God's house.

I later went to a gathering with my group and revealed the whole truth of my dad's behavior and evil deeds. The brothers and sisters who had been misled by him began to discern his essence. The church later issued a notice of my dad's expulsion. I went home, read it to him, and talked about his evil behavior. I was shocked when he said disdainfully, "I've known for a while now that I'd be kicked out. I've believed in God all these years just for blessings, otherwise I would've stopped believing a long time ago." Seeing he had no intention of repenting, I knew very clearly in my heart that his evil essence had been fully revealed. After my dad was kicked out, there weren't evildoers disrupting things in the church. In gatherings, brothers and sisters could all read God's words and fellowship on the truth without disruption. They did their duties as they should, and the church life bore fruit. I saw that in God's house, truth and righteousness rule, and when we practice the truth according to God's words, we witness His guidance and blessings. Regarding my dad, I gradually freed myself from my personal feelings and ultimately became able to practice a bit of the truth and support the church's work. This was all achieved through the judgment and chastisement of God's words!

56. How to Resolve Selfishness

By Zhang Jing, Czech Republic

Almighty God says, **“What is the standard by which a person’s deeds are judged to be good or evil? It depends on whether or not you, in your thoughts, expressions, and actions, possess the testimony of putting the truth into practice and of living out truth reality. If you do not have this reality or do not live this out, then you are without a doubt an evildoer. How does God see evildoers? Your thoughts and external acts do not bear testimony for God, nor do they put Satan to shame or defeat Satan; instead, they shame God, and are riddled with marks that cause God to be ashamed. You are not testifying for God, not expending yourself for God, nor are you fulfilling your responsibility and obligations toward God; instead, you are acting for your own sake. What is the implication of ‘for your own sake’? For Satan. Therefore, in the end, God will say, ‘Depart from Me, you that work iniquity.’ In God’s eyes, you have not done good deeds, but rather your behavior has turned evil. You will not be rewarded and God will not remember you. Is this not completely in vain?”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Give Your True Heart to God, and You Can Obtain the Truth). God’s words show us that we may expend ourselves and suffer a bit for our duty, but if our motive in this isn’t to satisfy God and we don’t have any testimony of practicing the truth, but just satisfy ourselves, then God sees this as doing evil. It’s disgusting to Him. A couple of years ago I noticed a sister was being disruptive to the church’s work, but I didn’t dare practice the truth or uphold principles. I was afraid of offending her. I didn’t expose and report her actions in time, and this harmed our gospel work. It was

wrongdoing on my part, too. I'm filled with remorse and self-reproach every time I think about it.

It was late March 2018 when Sister Chen joined our team as the team leader. After a little while, I discovered that she didn't take on responsibility in her duty. Sometimes someone we preached to wanted to investigate God's work of the last days and she wouldn't promptly arrange fellowship and testimony. This held up the gospel work. I sought her out to give her fellowship, but I barely touched on her issues, afraid she'd take it poorly. She explained it away, saying she also had another duty and couldn't keep up, but she'd do better in the future. I saw right away that she was taking it too lightly. She didn't see the seriousness of the problem. I figured I had to say something more so it wouldn't happen again and hold up the church's work. But just as I was about to open my mouth, I thought, "She's in charge, and I'm just a team member. If I point out her problem, won't she think I'm out of line, a busybody, and say I'm arrogant and unreasonable? Forget about it. I won't say anything. She's in charge, so she should know how important this duty is. She'll take care of things in the future." I felt a little uneasy, but I didn't bring it up with her again.

It wasn't long before a preacher from the Sola Fide Church wanted to look into God's work of the last days. Time was really tight, but at this critical moment, I couldn't get in touch with Sister Chen. I rushed to find another gospel team leader to provide fellowship. After Sister Chen found out, she reprimanded me harshly, saying, "Why did you get another team's leader to take care of it? It's my problem that I didn't get it done in time and any issues are my responsibility. Bringing someone else in doesn't accord with the principles." At that time, I wanted to talk about her issues in fellowship with her but changed my mind, thinking, "If I point out her issues right after she's dealt with and scolded me, what will she think of

me? We see each other all the time—if we're at an impasse she'll probably make things difficult for me. Forget it. It's better to have one less worry. I'll just do my own duty well." So, I held back what I wanted to say to her.

A month or so later, a co-worker in a Christian church became interested in Almighty God's work. I reminded Sister Chen about it several times. I said, "You have to arrange for someone to give him fellowship." She agreed at the time, but to my surprise, two days passed without her setting anything up. I was so angry. I thought, "I told you so many times and I told you it was urgent. Why didn't you take it remotely seriously? No, I can't keep idly watching our gospel work being hindered this way. I have to discuss it with brothers and sisters on the team and see what we can do about her problem." But I felt conflicted again just as I was about to get in touch with the others. If Sister Chen found out I was discussing this with everyone, she might think I was intentionally targeting her. If I offended her, she might retaliate and find an excuse to dismiss me from my duty. I figured the nail that sticks out gets hammered down. I decided to wait until someone else brought it up.

That evening, thinking about how many things Sister Chen had let slide, I started feeling really anxious, but still didn't dare speak up. I really hadn't been taking care of my responsibilities. Feeling uneasy, I came before God in prayer. I read these words from God after praying: **"Conscience and reason should both be components of a person's humanity. These are both most fundamental and most important. What kind of person is one who lacks conscience and does not have the reason of normal humanity? Generally speaking, he is a person who lacks humanity, a person of bad humanity. Let's analyze this closely. How does this person manifest corrupt humanity such that people say he has no humanity? What characteristics do such people possess?"**

What specific manifestations do they present? Such people are perfunctory in their actions and stand aloof from anything that does not concern them personally. They do not consider the interests of God's house, nor do they show consideration for God's will. They take on no burden of testifying for God or performing their duties, and they have no sense of responsibility. ... There are even people who, upon seeing a problem in the performance of their duty, remain silent. They see that others are causing interruptions and disturbances, yet do nothing to stop them. They do not consider the interests of God's house in the least, nor do they at all think about their own duties or responsibilities. They speak, act, stand out, put forth effort, and expend energy only for their own vanity, prestige, position, interests, and honor. ... Does this kind of person have conscience and reason? Does a person without conscience and reason who behaves in this way feel self-reproach? The conscience of this kind of person serves no purpose, and they have never felt self-reproach. So, can they feel the reproach or discipline of the Holy Spirit?" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Give Your True Heart to God, and You Can Obtain the Truth).

God's words went straight to the heart. Wasn't I precisely the kind of person God was exposing? I lacked conscience, humanity, and I was irresponsible in my duty. I'd adopted an attitude of cool indifference to protect my own interests. I wasn't being considerate to God's will or upholding the church's work. I knew well that Sister Chen wasn't serious about her duty and just muddled through, and she'd already harmed our gospel work. I should have pointed this out in fellowship. But I was afraid she'd say I should mind my own business, so I just skimmed over her problems. She didn't remotely change after that. I wanted to mention it again, to dissect the nature and consequences of doing her duty that way, but I was afraid I'd offend her,

then she might make things difficult for me and get me dismissed from my duty. I turned a blind eye and brushed it off. I hadn't dared stand up for the sake of God's house just to protect my own face, status, and interests, while I watched a team leader muddle through her duty. Where was my conscience? Disasters are getting worse and worse, so there must be more people investigating the true way. Getting people to accept God's salvation of the last days is an urgent priority. But I wasn't taking responsibility for this. I just wanted to protect myself, not the interests of God's house. That wasn't being considerate of God's will. I was so selfish and despicable. These thoughts left me feeling that I'd really let God down. I thought, "I can't keep on like this. I have to find a way to resolve this problem." Later, I reached out to some brothers and sisters on the team to discuss it and see how we could address Sister Chen's issue. Everyone unanimously agreed that she should have someone working with her to share the load. That way they could help each other and keep an eye on each other.

That same afternoon, I called Sister Chen and told her about what we'd discussed, and went into detail about her recent performance and the damage she'd done to the gospel work. To my surprise, Sister Chen didn't have the slightest regret or remorse for her behavior, but flat out rejected our plan. She stubbornly said she didn't need anyone to work with her. Seeing she had no self-awareness, I continued to fellowship with her, but before I could even finish, she said she had something to do and hung up. I was thinking, "Sister Chen has status but doesn't do practical work and doesn't want a partner. Isn't that tyrannical? If this goes on, the work of God's house will be held up. I have to point out this problem to her." For the next few days, I kept sending her messages, but she never responded. I was just watching the work of God's house be held up. I was thinking I couldn't lose any time in reporting this to the church leader, but just as I

was about to do that, I wanted to turn tail again. I thought, “If Sister Chen finds out I was the one who talked to the leader, what will happen? What will I do if she’s offended and finds an excuse to dismiss me from my duty? And what if the brothers and sisters say I’m always on Sister Chen’s case and I’m not treating her fairly?” I felt really conflicted. If I didn’t say something, I’d just be watching the team’s work flounder. But if I did say something, I might offend her. Right then, a sister came to ask me if I was interested in joining another team. I thought, “Doing another duty would be great, then I could leave my team behind. I wouldn’t feel guilty and tormented every day.” I shared my thoughts with another sister on the team later. She heard me out and then said, “You’re the most senior member of our team and you’re most familiar with the work. Sister Chen is turning a blind eye to our team’s issues. Do you really think it’s the right time to leave?” I felt terrible when she said this. I realized that I did know the team’s work better than anyone else, and I was just idly watching the work of God’s house be disrupted. I not only turned a blind eye but wanted to turn tail. That wasn’t protecting the interests of God’s house. I came before God in prayer, asking Him to guide me.

I read a couple of passages of God’s words in my devotionals after that. God says, **“You must enter from the side of positivity; be active and not passive. You must be unshaken by anyone or anything, in all situations, and you must not be influenced by anyone’s words. You must have a stable disposition; no matter what people say, you must immediately put into practice what you know to be the truth. You must always have My words at work inside of you, regardless of whom you might be facing; you must be able to stand firm in your testimony to Me and show consideration for My burdens. You must not be confused, agreeing blindly with people without having your own ideas; rather,**

you must have the courage to stand up and object to those things that do not come from Me. If you know clearly that something is wrong, yet you keep silent, then you are not a person who practices the truth. If you know that something is wrong, but then twist the topic around and are blocked by Satan, causing you to speak without any effect and to be unable to persevere until the end, then this means you still carry fear in your heart. Is it not then the case that your heart is still filled with Satan's ideas?" (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 12).

"All of you say you are considerate of God's burden and will defend the testimony of the church, but who among you has really been considerate of God's burden? Ask yourself: Are you someone who has shown consideration for His burden? Can you practice righteousness for Him? Can you stand up and speak for Me? Can you steadfastly put the truth into practice? Are you bold enough to fight against all of Satan's deeds? Would you be able to set your emotions aside and expose Satan for the sake of My truth? Can you allow My intentions to be fulfilled in you? Have you offered up your heart in the most crucial of moments? Are you someone who does My will? Ask yourself these questions, and think about them often" (The

Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 13).

Reading question after question, I felt like God was standing right in front of me, calling me to account. Every word was a blow. I was also asking myself, "Have I been considerate of God's burden? Have I practiced righteousness for God? Have I steadfastly practiced the truth?" The answers were all "No." I'd been elevated to do such an important duty by God's grace, so I should take responsibility and work with brothers and sisters to do it well. I saw the team leader muddle through, holding up the gospel work time and again. She was a false leader who didn't do practical work. I

should have stood up and reported her. But I was afraid of offending her and losing my duty, so I buried my head in the sand and just watched her disrupt the work of God's house. I didn't take a stand to protect it. I was so selfish and despicable. I had no sense of justice or responsibility! I protected my face and status at every turn. Even though I'd never disrupted the gospel work of God's house like Sister Chen, I kept quiet on a problem I saw and didn't practice the truth. Wasn't that standing on Satan's side, just letting it sabotage the work of God's house? Wasn't I favoring an outsider, biting the hand that fed me to act as Satan's helper? That thought really made me hate myself. How could I have been so selfish, so devoid of humanity? I knew I couldn't keep on like that. I couldn't keep walking on eggshells, just protecting myself. I had to practice the truth, be a person with a sense of justice, stand on God's side and protect the interests of His house. I decided to report Sister Chen at that moment. Just then, I heard from a sister that some new believers had become weak and negative after hearing rumors. Sister Chen hadn't arranged for anyone in time to fellowship with them and resolve their problems, so they'd nearly given up their faith because they'd been misled. I despised myself when I heard this. This was the terrible consequence of me not practicing the truth! After that, some of us from the team all told the church leader about Sister Chen's issues together. I was surprised that he looked into it and dismissed her that same day. The leader reprimanded me later, saying, "She's been holding things up this long; why is it that you never spoke up about it?" I was even more regretful and guilty when I heard that.

I later reflected on myself, on why I knew Sister Chen wasn't responsible in her duty and always held up the work of God's house, but never stood up to expose and report her. What was the root of me not practicing the truth? I read these words from God: **"Until people have**

experienced God's work and gained the truth, it is Satan's nature that takes charge and dominates them from within. What, specifically, does that nature entail? For example, why are you selfish? Why do you protect your own position? Why do you have such strong emotions? Why do you enjoy those unrighteous things? Why do you like those evils? What is the basis for your fondness for such things? Where do these things come from? Why are you so happy to accept them? By now, you have all come to understand that the main reason behind all these things is that Satan's poison is within you. As for what Satan's poison is, it can be fully expressed with words. For example, if you ask some evildoers why they committed evil, they will answer, 'Because it's every man for himself, and the devil take the hindmost.' This single phrase expresses the very root of the problem. Satan's logic has become people's lives. They may do things for this purpose or that, but they are only doing it for themselves. Everyone thinks that since it is every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost, people should live for their own sakes, and do everything in their power to secure a good position for the sake of food and fine clothing. 'Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost'—this is the life and the philosophy of man, and it also represents human nature. These words of Satan are precisely the poison of Satan, and when people internalize it, it becomes their nature. Satan's nature is exposed through these words; they represent it completely. This poison becomes people's lives as well as the foundation of their existence, and corrupted humanity has been consistently dominated by this poison for thousands of years" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. How to Walk the Path of Peter). God's words showed me the reason behind not practicing the truth was that I was filled with Satan's philosophies for living, like "Every man for himself and the

devil take the hindmost,” “Sensible people are good at self-protection, seeking only to avoid making mistakes,” “Let things drift if they do not affect one personally,” “The less trouble, the better,” and “The nail that sticks up the most gets hammered down.” They’d become a part of me long ago. They’d become my nature. I’d become selfish, crafty, and self-interested because I’d been living by those things. I just couldn’t help but protect my own interests in the face of a problem. Before I was a believer, in my professional and personal life, whenever I could possibly offend someone, even if they did something wrong, I’d stay silent. I kept living by these satanic philosophies even after becoming a believer. I couldn’t help but be protective over my interests in my duty, then I couldn’t practice the truth. Sister Chen was an example of that. I saw she wasn’t doing practical work and couldn’t take feedback, that she was a false leader, so I should’ve taken a stand and reported her. But I was afraid my report wouldn’t get anywhere and I’d lose my duty. “The nail that sticks up the most gets hammered down,” and “The less trouble, the better” were my philosophies for living. I was a coward. I let an irresponsible person disrupt things without daring to take a stand. I’d been so selfish and deceitful. Doing my duty and protecting the interests of God’s house is a positive thing and it’s in line with God’s will. When someone is disruptive to the work of God’s house, it’s exactly the time to stand on God’s side and protect the interests of His house. God requires this of His chosen. It’s my duty and responsibility. But I was afraid of sticking my neck out, of compromising my interests, so I didn’t dare stand up for the work of God’s house. I didn’t fulfill my duty or responsibilities. What kind of believer was I? I didn’t stick my neck out; I compromised with Satan and buried my head in the sand. I allowed an irresponsible person to disrupt the work of God’s house. I didn’t dare take a stand. I didn’t have any backbone at all. I was living

without any integrity or dignity. I saw very clearly that Sister Chen was disrupting the work of God's house, but I not only turned a blind eye but wanted to run away from it. Wasn't that standing on Satan's side, opposing God? That's a major transgression to God. Really thinking about it, I couldn't practice the truth and I was afraid I'd lose my duty if I reported Sister Chen. But what really happened was that after we all reported Sister Chen, she was dismissed right away. This fact made me feel ashamed and it showed me that in God's house, Christ and the truth hold sway. Anyone who doesn't practice the truth and hinders the work of God's house can't gain a foothold there. They'll be eliminated sooner or later if they don't repent. But I wasn't looking at the things based on the principles of the truth. I was just constrained by power and status. I saw the person in charge as my superior and thought that if I offended her, I wouldn't be able to gain a foothold in God's house. I thought God's house was just as dark as the world, without any fairness or justice. Wasn't I blaspheming God? Without God exposing me by setting up that environment, without the judgment and chastisement of His words, I still wouldn't know what terrible consequences come from living by satanic philosophies. Something I really learned from this is that, as a believer, living by God's words, practicing the truth, and upholding principles really brings me peace and tranquility. It's also a righteous thing that a believer should do. Later on, all of us in the team fellowshiped on what we'd experienced and gained. Everyone had learned lessons to varying degrees, especially about God's righteous disposition. The work in our team gradually took a turn for the better.

In my duty after that, after over a month of coordination with Sister Liu, the leader of another team, I found that she was arrogant and autocratic. She hardly ever accepted other people's suggestions and she'd already disrupted the work of God's house. I knew that I should let the

church leader know this time. But then I thought, “We haven’t worked together very long, so I don’t know her all that well. Could I be wrong about this? What if it’s looked into and it turns out she doesn’t have a big problem? What will the church leader and the others think of me? Will they think I’m nitpicking? And what would Sister Liu think of me if she found out? Never mind, I shouldn’t say anything.” I was just about to sweep this under the rug, but I felt really accused by my conscience. I remembered how before the gospel work had really been compromised because I hadn’t reported Sister Chen in time. I deeply regretted that. I thought, “I can’t live in a selfish, despicable way. I can’t be left with regrets this time.” A passage of God’s words occurred to me just then: **“For each of you fulfilling your duty, no matter how profoundly you understand the truth, if you wish to enter truth reality, then the simplest way to practice is to think of the interests of God’s house in everything you do, and to let go of your selfish desires, your individual intent, motives, prestige, and status. Put the interests of God’s house first—this is the least you should do. If a person performing his duty cannot do even this much, then how can he be said to be performing his duty? This is not performing one’s duty. You should first consider the interests of God’s house, consider God’s own interests, and consider His work, and put these considerations first and foremost; only after that can you think about the stability of your status or how others see you”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Give Your True Heart to God, and You Can Obtain the Truth). God’s words gave me a path of practice, which is putting the interests of God’s house first without considering my own. I shouldn’t care what others think of me, but do what’s right for the work of God’s house. We hadn’t known each other long and I didn’t know her all that well, but I really had seen that her behavior had disrupted the work of God’s house. I knew I should share what I’d seen,

correct my motives, and fulfill my duty and responsibilities. I later told the church leader about Sister Liu's issues and after investigating it, she was dismissed in accordance with the principles. I felt assured and comforted when I heard the news and I felt I'd upheld the interests of God's house. I also really experienced that the only way to live meaningfully is to live by God's words.

57. To Report or Not to Report

By Yang Yi, China

Almighty God says, **“For the sake of your fate, you should seek the approval of God. This is to say, since you acknowledge that you are a member of the house of God, you ought then to bring peace of mind to God and satisfy Him in all things. You must, in other words, be principled in your actions and conform to the truth in them. If this is beyond you, then you shall be detested and rejected by God and spurned by every man. Once you have fallen into such a predicament, you cannot then be counted among the house of God, which is precisely what it is meant by not being approved of by God”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Three Admonitions). God requires that we do things with principle and in line with the truth. It’s also our obligation as believers. We can’t gain God’s approval without being up to this standard. In the past, I was always held back by my corrupt disposition. I didn’t speak or act with principle. When I discovered false church leaders or workers, I didn’t dare expose or report them, and this delayed the work of God’s house. I learned through experience how important it is to do things with principle.

Our church leader put me on editing duty last summer to have me help the team leader with the team’s work. I’d been dismissed from my last duty three months before, so I gave heartfelt thanks to God for another opportunity. I really treasured this chance and wanted to rely on God in undertaking this work. I was briefed on the team’s work by the team leader, and I saw they didn’t have enough hands to edit documents. This really impacted their progress. I suggested a few brothers and sisters so we could discuss who would best fit that duty. But his response was, “There’s no rush. Let’s take it easy—you edit a few documents first, then we’ll see.”

Seeing how nonchalant he was made me nervous. There weren't enough people in the team who understood the truth and had good caliber, and this had already impacted the work. How could he say, "Take it easy"? Wasn't that irresponsible? I felt like I had to bring it up with him. But then I thought, "He is in charge. He's been doing this duty longer than me and he understands more principles. He should have a good sense of how to arrange things. I just joined the team and everything is new to me. If I run off at the mouth, won't he say I'm being pushy and out of line? Forget about it. I'll wait and see."

After a little while I discovered that he was really lax about training team members, and he wasn't principled in assigning people to tasks. Some brothers and sisters would be doing a certain duty, and without a thought for the overall situation, an individual's strengths, or what kind of duty they were suited for, he'd just arbitrarily assign them to another team. This impacted the work of God's house and held up our progress. I mentioned to him that his arrangements were unprincipled and inappropriate, but he kept on anyway. I wanted to fellowship with him to dissect and reveal the nature of what he was doing. But then I thought, "I'm new to the team. If I'm constantly suggesting things, will he say I'm controlling and unreasonable?" When I thought of that, I didn't dare mention it again.

Before long, I got a letter from a church leader asking me if we'd found anyone to edit documents and if the team leader and I were working well together. This worried me a bit. I didn't know how to respond. If the team leader found out that I'd told the church leader he didn't do practical work, how could we possibly keep working together? On top of that, I didn't know what the others in the team thought of him. If my perception was off, would the church leader say that I was nitpicking, that I was biased? But if I didn't speak up, I'd feel I wasn't being honest or protecting

the interests of God's house. After considerable thought, I decided to find out what the others thought of him first. I could respond to the letter later.

One day, I saw Brother Yang in a gathering. He said he'd been in the team for several months, and the team leader had never been very responsible. He didn't keep abreast of the work or follow up in a timely fashion, and he didn't guide brothers and sisters or help them enter into the principles. There were also some urgent documents he hadn't assigned to people in time, and he was really casual about it when other people brought this up. Brother Yang also said that he hardly ever heard him share fellowship in gatherings about how to reflect on and know himself, and how to practice God's words when he had an issue, but he just spouted some doctrine. He said the team leader was a smooth talker, but he didn't do any real work at all. I thought to myself, "It looks like the team leader is just muddling along without doing any real work. He doesn't accept the truth or suggestions from others. Isn't that the definition of a false leader? If he keeps doing this duty, responsible for such important work in God's house, that could really damage the work of God's house." This made me realize how serious the problem was and that I should tell the church leader without delay. But then I thought, "If I do report this and he doesn't end up being replaced, he might make things difficult for me or even dismiss me from my duty. I'd been doing devotionals and self-reflection for three months. I haven't been in this duty long. If I'm dismissed, will I get a shot at another duty? The old saying goes, 'The nail that sticks up the most gets hammered down.' I shouldn't say anything. I'll wait until someone else reports him and then chime in. That way I won't stick my neck out."

I wanted to just muddle through with one eye open and one eye closed, but God sees into our hearts. I had this really uncomfortable feeling on my way home. My conscience was pricked. I felt it was the Holy Spirit

reprimanding me. I prayed to God and asked Him to enlighten me so that I could know myself. After my prayer, I thought of these words of God: **“All of you say you are considerate of God’s burden and will defend the testimony of the church, but who among you has really been considerate of God’s burden? Ask yourself: Are you someone who has shown consideration for His burden? Can you practice righteousness for Him? Can you stand up and speak for Me? Can you steadfastly put the truth into practice? Are you bold enough to fight against all of Satan’s deeds? Would you be able to set your emotions aside and expose Satan for the sake of My truth? Can you allow My intentions to be fulfilled in you? Have you offered up your heart in the most crucial of moments? Are you someone who does My will?”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 13). I had no response to this. I was really upset. I was always talking about being considerate of God’s will and upholding the church’s work, but when something really happened that violated the truth and harmed God’s house, I just upheld my own interests. I knew the team leader was slipshod in his duty and didn’t do any real work, that it had already impacted the church’s work and I should tell the church leader. But I just protected myself, afraid he’d get back at me or that I could even lose my duty. I shrank back at the crucial moment, turning a blind eye, pretending not to know what was going on. I wasn’t upholding the interests of God’s house one bit. I was so selfish and despicable, without any humanity or reason!

When I got home, I prayed to God in seeking: “What really made me not practice the truth, and not uphold the church’s work?” I later read this passage of God’s words: **“Most people wish to pursue and practice the truth, but much of the time they merely have a resolution and the desire to do so; they do not possess the life of the truth within them. As**

a result, when they come across evil forces or encounter wicked and bad people committing evil deeds, or false leaders and antichrists doing things in a way that violates principles—thus causing the work of God’s house to suffer losses, and harming God’s chosen ones—they lose the courage to stand up and speak out. What does it mean when you have no courage? Does it mean that you are timid or inarticulate? Or is it that you do not understand thoroughly, and therefore do not have the confidence to speak up? It is none of these; it is that you are being controlled by several kinds of corrupt dispositions. One of these dispositions is cunning. You think of yourself first, thinking, ‘If I speak up, how will it benefit me? If I speak up and displease someone, how will we get along in the future?’ This is a cunning mentality, right? Is this not the result of a cunning disposition? ... Your satanic, corrupt disposition is controlling you; you are not even the master of your own mouth. Even if you want to give voice to honest words, you are both unable and afraid to say them. You are not able to commit even one ten-thousandth of the things you should do, the things you should say, and the responsibility you should take; your hands and feet are bound by your satanic, corrupt disposition. You are not in charge at all. Your satanic, corrupt disposition tells you how to speak, and so you speak that way; it tells you what to do, and so you do it. ... You do not seek the truth, much less do you practice the truth, yet you keep on praying, building up your determination, making resolutions, and swearing oaths. And what has come from all of this? You are still a yes-man: ‘I won’t provoke anyone, nor will I offend anyone. If a matter is none of my concern, then I’ll stay away from it; I won’t say anything about things that have nothing to do with me, and this goes without exception. If anything is injurious to my own interests, my pride, or my self-

regard, I still will pay none of it any heed, and will approach all of it cautiously; I mustn't act rashly. The nail that sticks up gets hit first, and I'm not that stupid!' You are totally under the control of your corrupt dispositions of wickedness, cunning, hardness, and detesting the truth. They are running you into the ground, and have grown harder for you to bear even than the Golden Hoop the Monkey King wore. Living under the control of a corrupt disposition is so exhausting and excruciating!" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only Those

Who Practice the Truth Are God-Fearing). God's words very incisively revealed my cunning and evil satanic dispositions. When I initially brought up the lack of people in the team and saw the team leader was totally unruffled and didn't take responsibility, I knew very well that it would impact the church's work. But I didn't dare say more, afraid he'd say I was overstepping and would start to dislike me. Later, I saw that he switched people around without any principles, robbing Peter to pay Paul and damaging our work. I still barely mentioned it, but just glossed over it. I knew nothing had come of it, but I was afraid to deal with or expose him. When Brother Yang told me more about him, I had no doubt that he wasn't doing practical work and wouldn't accept the truth, that he was a false leader and I should report it to the church leader right away. Still, I was afraid he'd take my duty away from me, so I tucked my tail and ran again, just to protect my own position and prospects. I was so selfish and devious! Every time I saw one of his problems, I didn't dare expose him or tell the church leader. The work of God's house was disrupted as a result. I'd been living by satanic poisons like "Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost," "The nail that sticks up the most gets hammered down," "Might makes right," and "The county official cannot order people around like the local one can." My view was so absurd, and I became more and more self-

interested and devious. I was on my guard and tiptoeing around in everything I did, protecting my own interests at every turn, afraid of being held responsible for any trouble caused. I couldn't stand the thought of being at a loss. It was so hard for me to utter a true word, to say what was really going on. I didn't have the guts to report and expose a false leader. I was firmly bound and controlled by these satanic dispositions and poisons. I couldn't tell the truth, and I had no righteousness at all. It was such a cowardly way to live. I really experienced how absurd these satanic poisons are, and when living by them, everything I did went against the truth and opposed God. I didn't have any human likeness at all.

Just then, the church issued a work arrangement. We were told again that if any evildoers and antichrists, or any false leaders or workers who weren't doing practical work had been discovered, they should be reported to protect the interests of God's house. That is the responsibility of every one of God's chosen people. I felt terrible when these requirements from God's house were put before me. I was well aware that we had a false leader in our team, but I hadn't dared report him. How was I worthy of being one of God's chosen? I looked for some words of God pertinent to my state and found this: **"What is the attitude that people should have in terms of how to treat a leader or worker? If what he does is right, then you can obey him; if what he does is wrong, then you can expose him, and even oppose him and raise a different opinion. If he is unable to do practical work, and is revealed to be a false leader, a false worker or an antichrist, then you can refuse to accept his leadership, and you can also report and expose him. However, some of God's chosen people do not understand the truth and are particularly cowardly, and so they do not dare do anything. They say, 'If the leader kicks me out, I'm finished; if he has everyone expose or forsake me, then I will no longer**

be able to believe in God. If I leave the church, then God will not want me and will not save me. The church represents God!’ Do these ways of thinking not affect such a person’s attitude toward those things? Could it really be true that if the leader expels you, you can no longer be saved? Is the question of your salvation dependent upon your leader’s attitude toward you? Why do so many people have such a degree of fear? If, as soon as one who is a false leader or an antichrist threatens you, you do not dare to report it higher up and even guarantee that from then on, you will be of a single mind with the leader, then are you not done for? Is this the sort of person who pursues truth? Not only do you not dare to expose such wicked behavior as might be committed by satanic antichrists, but on the contrary, you obey them and even take their words as the truth, to which you submit. Is this not the epitome of stupidity?’” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. For Leaders and Workers, Choosing a Path Is of Utmost Importance (1)).

Reading these words from God brightened my heart. I’d been afraid to report the team leader mainly because of my fear that he’d make things difficult for me if I offended him, or that I could even lose my duty. It was as if he could determine my duty or my fate. It was such an absurd way of looking at it. Whether I would be dismissed or what my fate held were in God’s hands. No human had the final say. False leaders and antichrists can’t control that. God’s house isn’t like the world. Here, the truth and righteousness reign. False leaders and antichrists can’t get a foothold in God’s house. They may gain power for a time, but ultimately, they will all be exposed and eliminated. The church had dismissed and eliminated quite a few false leaders and antichrists in the past. I saw that really clearly, but when one of those appeared in my circle and I needed to report him to protect the interests of God’s house, I shrank back. I preferred to be Satan’s little lackey. I was so weak and cowardly. I

didn't understand God's righteous disposition, and I really didn't see that He rules and sees everything. I was afraid of offending a man, but not of offending God. How was that having a place for God in my heart?

I read another passage of God's words after that. **"If a church contains no one who is willing to practice the truth and no one who can stand witness for God, then that church should be completely isolated, and its connections with other churches must be severed. This is called 'burying death'; this is what it means to cast out Satan. If a church contains several local bullies, and they are followed by 'little flies' that entirely lack discernment, and if the congregants, even after having seen the truth, are still incapable of rejecting the binds and manipulation of these bullies, then all those fools will be eliminated in the end. These little flies might not have done anything terrible, but they are even more deceitful, even more slick and evasive, and everyone like this will be eliminated. Not a single one shall remain! Those who belong to Satan will be returned to Satan, while those who belong to God will surely go in search of the truth; this is decided by their natures. Let all those who follow Satan perish! No pity will be shown to such people. Let those who search for the truth be provided for, and may they take pleasure in God's word to their hearts' content. God is righteous; He would not show favoritism to anyone. If you are a devil, then you are incapable of practicing the truth; if you are someone who searches for the truth, then it is certain that you will not be taken captive by Satan. This is beyond all doubt"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. A Warning to Those Who Do Not Practice the Truth). Reading His words, I could really feel God's holy, righteous, unoffendable disposition. He will not abide false leaders and antichrists disrupting the work of His house and harming His chosen. He also hates those who don't practice the truth, who

don't protect the interests of God's house when those people appear. If they don't repent, they'll all end up eliminated and punished, too. I thought about how I knew that the team leader was a false leader, but I didn't practice the truth or have the courage to report him. It was all for my own interests. I bowed to Satan time after time, standing on its side, indulging and shielding that false leader at the expense of the work of God's house. I had a part in the evil that he was doing. I was enjoying the truth that God bestows and eating and drinking from His table. But at the critical moment when Satan was wreaking havoc in God's house, I wasn't able to protect the interests of God's house. Instead, I bit the hand that fed me and favored an enemy. That was a betrayal of God, and it seriously offended His disposition. Thinking of these words of God, **"Let all those who follow Satan perish!"** left me feeling really afraid. I knew if I didn't repent, I'd definitely be eliminated by God, along with the false leader. I saw the nature and serious consequences of failing to report a false leader and really hated myself for being so selfish and despicable. I hadn't protected the interests of God's house at all. I was totally lacking humanity. I then came before God in prayer. "Oh God, I'm so selfish and devious. I saw a false leader in the church that I never reported or exposed. I covered up for him and indulged him, and acted as Satan's servant just to protect my own interests. I should be punished. God, I'll never do something like that again. I wish to repent. Please give me strength so I can practice the truth, report and expose that false leader, and uphold the church's work."

I read these words from God in my devotionals the next day: **"You must learn how to dissect your thoughts and ideas. Whichever things you are doing are wrong, and whatever behaviors of yours God would not like, you should be able to reverse them immediately and rectify them. What is the purpose of rectifying them? It is to accept and take**

on board the truth, while rejecting the things within you that belong to Satan and replacing them with the truth. You used to rely on your corrupt dispositions, such as cunning and deceptiveness, but now you do not; now, when you do things, you rely on attitudes, states, and dispositions that are honest, pure, and open. ... When the truth becomes your life, then if someone blasphemes against God, has no reverence for God, is slipshod in their duty, causes interruptions or disturbs the work of God's house, and when you see this happen, you are then able to discern it and expose it when necessary, and approach it in accordance with the truth principle" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only Those Who Practice the Truth Are God-Fearing). God's words showed me that the most basic element of faith is having an honest heart, practicing the truth, protecting the interests of God's house, and doing things by principle. That's how we can bring God joy. I knew I had to practice the truth and report our team leader in accordance with principle. And so, I wrote out everything he'd done, accurately and in detail, and gave it to the church leader. After verifying everything, the church leader confirmed that he had been doing his duty carelessly and hadn't done any real work. He was indeed a false leader and was dismissed from his duty. I felt a sense of peace when I was notified of that. That experience showed me how righteous God is, and that in His house, Christ and the truth reign. No matter how high someone's position, how great their seniority, they must submit to the truth and to God's words. Those who don't practice the truth won't be able to stand firm in God's house. They'll be eliminated in the end. Only being an honest person, practicing God's words, and doing things in a principled way is in line with God's will and gains His approval.

58. Exposing a False Leader: A Personal Struggle

By Zheng Yi, South Korea

Last year, I was doing my duty in a church out of town, but I came home after being replaced for not doing practical work. After that, I found that our leader, Sister Li, didn't have anything enlightening to say about God's words, but just preached literal doctrine. She never talked about knowing herself or shared her own experiences. She was imperious when helping others with their problems, like a master schooling their apprentice, and she couldn't resolve anyone's practical issues. She was always talking about how she'd worked and suffered in her duty so she'd be looked up to and adored. She was a law unto herself. There was a sister, new to the faith, who was scared, seeing the Chinese Communist Party arresting Christians. Sister Li didn't fellowship on the truth to support her but just dismissed her from her duty. Some deacons and I gave her suggestions a number of times, but she'd just make excuses and argue with us. Based on the principles, a leader who doesn't do things according to the principles of the truth and who won't accept brothers' and sisters' oversight and pruning, isn't someone who accepts and obeys the truth. Sister Li didn't know herself, she lacked life entry, and couldn't resolve others' real problems. A church leader like that can only do harm to the church's work and brothers' and sisters' lives. I was certain Sister Li was a false leader and wasn't fit for church work and I wanted to report her. But I got cold feet when I was writing a letter to report her. I'd just been dismissed. I wasn't doing my duty. If I reported Sister Li and the others couldn't see what I saw, they could just turn it back on me: "Oh, look at Zheng Yi. She's just been dismissed but can't keep her head down. She should be looking at herself, not other people. It looks like she doesn't have real self-knowledge or

repentance.” If they said that, I really wouldn’t be able to hold my head up around them. As a false leader who had been dismissed, I felt I had the least room to talk. I especially thought about how that report would probably offend Sister Li, and being in the same church, we see each other all the time. How could we possibly get along after that? What if she kept her position and made things difficult for me? The more I thought about it, the more I felt boxed into a corner. I figured the report could offend her and I shouldn’t stick my neck out that way. I couldn’t afford to in light of my own circumstances, and a false leader in the church wasn’t an issue on my shoulders alone. Let someone else report her. I just wanted to keep going to gatherings and keep the peace.

I decided to put that issue out of my mind, but I still felt a nagging uneasiness. Lying in bed at night, my head would be full of thoughts of Sister Li bragging in gatherings and preaching by rote. That would be harmful for brothers and sisters if it went on. I felt bad about not speaking up. I later read these words from God: **“Suppose, for example, there is a team of people with a person leading them; if this person is referred to as a ‘leader’ or as a ‘worker,’ what is their function within the team? (The function of leadership.) What effect does this person’s leadership have on the people they lead and on the team as a whole? It affects the team’s direction and its path. This implies that if this person in a position of leadership walks the wrong path, then, at the very least, it will cause the people beneath them and the entire team to veer from the right path; beyond that, it might disrupt or destroy the entire team’s direction as they move forward, as well as their speed and pace. So when it comes to this group of people, the path they follow and the direction of the path they choose, the extent to which they understand the truth as well as their belief in God affect not only themselves, but**

all the brothers and sisters who are within the scope of their leadership. If a leader is a right person, one who is walking the right path and pursues and practices truth, then the people they lead will eat and drink properly and seek properly, and, at the same time, the leader's personal progress will be constantly visible to others. So, what is the correct path that a leader should walk? It is being able to lead others to an understanding of the truth and an entry into the truth, and to lead others before God. What is an incorrect path? It is frequently to elevate oneself and to bear witness to oneself, pursuing status, fame, and profit, and never bearing witness to God. What effect does this have on the people beneath them? (It brings those people before them.) People will stray far from God and come under this leader's control. Is it not obvious that people who are brought before their leader would be controlled by that leader? And, of course, this takes them far from God. If you lead people to come before you, then you are leading them to come before corrupt mankind, and you are leading them to come before Satan, not God. Only leading people to come before truth is leading them to come before God. These are the effects that these two types of people—those who walk the correct path and those who walk the incorrect path—have on those who are led” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. For Leaders and Workers, Choosing a Path Is of Utmost Importance (1)). I saw in God's words that a leader's path not only affects them personally, but it has a direct impact on others' life entry and the entire church's work. Sister Li only ever preached empty words and couldn't resolve brothers' and sisters' real-life difficulties. She was always showing off and misleading people and brothers and sisters looked up to her. On top of that, she was arrogant and dictatorial and she alone had final say in a lot of the church's work. She didn't seek the principles of the truth or accept

others' suggestions, but just handled things based on her own notions. There was no chance of her upholding the church's work—she was outright hindering it. With a false leader like that in the church, brothers and sisters would be dragged down along with her. Seeing so many believers deceived by a false leader and their lives suffering because of it is very sad for God. I'd already discerned that Sister Li was a false leader and I'd seen the harm done to brothers and sisters and the church life by having a false leader in charge. But just because I was afraid of offending her, I watched the church's work and others' life entry be held back with my eyes wide open. I didn't take a stand to expose and report her. I wasn't righteous at all, and I wasn't being considerate of God's will. I was so unfeeling! I'd already damaged the church's work by not doing real work in my previous duty. Now seeing a false leader deceive God's chosen, but not standing up to report her or upholding the interests of the church was unconscionable of me! I felt more and more that I owed it to God, and that as a created being, I should take a stand, consider God's will and uphold the church's work. That was my duty, and it was a responsibility I had to fulfill! This thought gave me some strength and I told myself, "For the interests of the church and so God's chosen people can live an authentic church life, I have to practice the truth and speak up about Sister Li's issues. I can't let a false leader lead brothers and sisters astray any longer!" Just as I was preparing to write a report, I heard that recently, after an older sister pointed out some of Sister Li's issues to her, she stopped gathering with her. Hearing this made me so angry. I felt that she really refused to accept the truth. But at the same time, my worries cropped up again. She'd excluded that sister just for expressing some views. If she found out I'd reported her, would she bear a grudge against me and give me a hard time? If she started judging me and accused me of attacking leaders and workers, what would the others think? With her

suppressing me I'd have no chance to do my duty and that would be even harder to bear. But I'd feel really guilty if I didn't report her. There was a tug-of-war inside of me—I was in turmoil.

And so, I brought it before God in prayer and seeking. I read this in God's words after that: **“All of you say you are considerate of God's burden and will defend the testimony of the church, but who among you has really been considerate of God's burden? Ask yourself: Are you someone who has shown consideration for His burden? Can you practice righteousness for Him? Can you stand up and speak for Me? Can you steadfastly put the truth into practice? Are you bold enough to fight against all of Satan's deeds? Would you be able to set your emotions aside and expose Satan for the sake of My truth? Can you allow My intentions to be fulfilled in you? Have you offered up your heart in the most crucial of moments? Are you someone who does My will? Ask yourself these questions, and think about them often”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 13). I felt every word was knocking on the door of my conscience, especially **“All of you say you are considerate of God's burden and will defend the testimony of the church, but who among you has really been considerate of God's burden?”** It felt like God was standing right next to me, asking me this question. I knew that Sister Li was a false leader and I knew it would harm the life entry of God's chosen people if not resolved in time, but I was afraid she'd be offended and bear a grudge against me, or that I'd be isolated and expelled from the Church. I'd just upheld my own interests at every turn, not daring to uphold the principles and report her. This spiritual battle required me to stand witness at the key time, but I protected my own interests and was a people pleaser, disgusting God. I really hated myself. I didn't want to be a people pleaser anymore. After

that, I calmed down and reflected on myself. I was well aware that she was a false leader and I was willing to report her according to the principles. But when I heard she'd excluded someone for giving her some advice, why had I opted to protect myself instead of standing up for the church's work? Why was I always protecting my own interests? I started to pray and seek on this particular issue.

There were some words of God that I read in a devotional one time. **“Most people wish to pursue and practice the truth, but much of the time they merely have a resolution and the desire to do so; they do not possess the life of the truth within them. As a result, when they come across evil forces or encounter wicked and bad people committing evil deeds, or false leaders and antichrists doing things in a way that violates principles—thus causing the work of God’s house to suffer losses, and harming God’s chosen ones—they lose the courage to stand up and speak out. What does it mean when you have no courage? Does it mean that you are timid or inarticulate? Or is it that you do not understand thoroughly, and therefore do not have the confidence to speak up? It is none of these; it is that you are being controlled by several kinds of corrupt dispositions. One of these dispositions is cunning. You think of yourself first, thinking, ‘If I speak up, how will it benefit me? If I speak up and displease someone, how will we get along in the future?’ This is a cunning mentality, right? Is this not the result of a cunning disposition? Another is a selfish and mean disposition. You think, ‘What does a loss to the interests of God’s house have to do with me? Why should I care? It’s got nothing to do with me. Even if I see it and hear it happen, I don’t need to do anything. It’s not my responsibility—I’m not a leader.’ Such things are inside you, as if they had sprung from your unconscious mind, and as if they occupy**

permanent positions in your heart—they are the corrupt, satanic dispositions of man. These corrupt dispositions control your thoughts and bind your hands and feet, and they control your mouth. When you want to say something in your heart, the words reach your lips but you do not say them, or, if you do speak, your words are roundabout, leaving you with room to maneuver—you do not speak at all clearly. Others feel nothing after hearing you, and what you have said has not resolved the problem. You think to yourself: ‘Well, I spoke up. My conscience is at ease. I’ve fulfilled my responsibility.’ In truth, you know in your heart that you have not said all you should, that what you have said has had no effect, and that the detriment to the work of God’s house remains. You have not fulfilled your responsibility, yet you say overtly that you have fulfilled your responsibility, or that what was happening was unclear to you. Are you not then completely under the control of your corrupt, satanic dispositions?” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses

of Christ of the Last Days. Only Those Who Practice the Truth Are God-Fearing). Through God’s words, I realized that I only thought about myself in the face of a problem. I was selfish and deceitful. I followed satanic philosophies like “Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost,” “Sensible people are good at self-protection, seeking only to avoid making mistakes,” “When you know something is wrong, it is better to say less,” and “Never lift a finger without a reward.” They were rooted in my very nature, keeping me firmly shackled so that practicing the truth was incredibly hard. I knew I should report her according to the principles for the sake of the church’s work, but when I was about to, I was afraid of offending her and being judged and mistreated by her. At that thought, my sense of obligation, responsibility, and duty just disappeared and I felt that a false leader in the church wasn’t my personal problem. I didn’t want to make any waves so I

could avoid offending her and protect myself. I went against the Holy Spirit's enlightenment over and over until I didn't even feel guilty. I was entirely shackled by my satanic corruption. I'd committed a similar transgression in my duty before, living by satanic life philosophies. I discovered an arrogant leader with a skewed understanding of the truth who should be dismissed. But then I saw she had some caliber and was good at preaching literal doctrine and deceiving people. Seeing lots of brothers and sisters didn't have discernment about her, I was afraid they would judge me and say I was coldhearted if she was replaced. So I put it off for over two months before getting her dismissed. This was incredibly disruptive for the church's work. I saw a false leader in the church but I made the same old mistake. I wanted to stay out of it. The way I performed my duty showed I was really selfish and deceitful and I couldn't practice the truth when it impacted my own interests. I'd repeatedly violated the truth and lost my testimony. It was a mark of shame. Realizing this, I prostrated myself before God and prayed: "Oh God! Now I've seen how deeply Satan has corrupted me. I'm a selfish, despicable people pleaser. I'm lowly and filthy. God, please save me from the bonds of my corrupt disposition."

I later read in a fellowship that Satan rules out in the world, but God and the truth rule in the church, they are two different worlds, and that in God's house, even if some evil person or someone of poor humanity is selected as a leader, they won't last long without the reality of the truth. This proves that the truth reigns in God's house. Satan holds the world in darkness and people have to speak and act based on its philosophies. Flattery is the only way to get ahead. Being honest and offending someone leads to punishment. Whether it's among regular people or the powerful, being honest gets you bullied and excluded, and a lot of people even lose their lives over it. But the truth and righteousness rule in God's house. God

blesses and likes those who pursue the truth, and honest people with a sense of justice. Those who protect the church's interests and God's chosen people, who dare expose false leaders and antichrists, can be accepted, saved, and perfected by God. They also get others' approval and support. Those who don't submit to the truth, but go against it, no matter how lofty their name or status, will end up abandoned and eliminated by the Holy Spirit, just like the antichrist Yang who was kicked out of the church last year. She suppressed and excluded any dissenters when she was a leader and put her family and friends in important positions. She tried to build her own empire in opposition to God and even stole offerings. She thought she'd surrounded herself entirely with family and friends so her evil deeds wouldn't be exposed. But God sees all things, and in His wisdom, He uses Satan's tricks to His benefit. He set up an environment to get those with a sense of justice to report and expose her evil. After the church's investigation and verification, not only did she have to return everything she'd stolen, but she was permanently expelled from the Church. This shows that no matter what someone's duty or status is, no one who does evil or doesn't pursue the truth can escape God's righteous judgment! God's house is not like the world. Nothing that runs counter to the truth can thrive in God's house. Anyone who discovers something against the truth can stand up to expose and stop it. This shows that the truth reigns in God's house. As for reporting Sister Li, I didn't understand God's righteousness or realize that He sees and rules over all. False leaders and antichrists can't gain a foothold in God's house. Whether I had a duty to do and what my fate and outcome would be were all in God's hands, not any leader's. I couldn't be held back by her anymore. So, I made a factual report about Sister Li's issues. A leader came to our church soon after to look into the situation. It was determined that Sister Li was a false leader based on the

principles, and she was dismissed. After that, Sister Li gained some self-knowledge through devotionals and reflection and she wanted to repent and change. The next leader chosen was a sister who pursued the truth and all of the church's work gradually picked up. I saw God's righteousness and that the truth rules in God's house. God exposed my selfishness and deceit and cleansed my corruption through me reporting the false leader. This really is God saving and perfecting me!

59. The Fruit of an Honest Report

By Zhao Ming, China

In April 2011, I needed to take the place of a leader named Yao Lan in a church in another part of the country. During the handover, while Yao Lan gave me the rundown on the situation in the church, she mentioned that her daughter Xiaomin was a deacon of watering, and that she would help me familiarize myself with the work in the church. Hearing her explain everything in such an orderly way, I couldn't help but feel some admiration. Yao Lan seemed to handle the church work really well and be very capable, so it was hardly any wonder she was now able to take charge of such a wide range of work. I silently resolved to be considerate of God's will and do my best to do church work well.

The next day, Xiaomin took me along to a team leader meeting. After we read God's words, I shared a bit of my own relevant experience and understanding. Sister Xia then said, displeased, "Our old leader Yao Lan didn't fellowship on God's words like that. She'd explain them to us line by line, saying things like 'This is encouragement,' and 'This is a warning.'" The other brothers and sisters chimed in, saying how clearly Yao Lan fellowshipped on the truth. I was totally astonished and thought: "Isn't fellowshipping on God's words talking about our own experiences and understanding based on His words? How come Yao Lan doesn't talk about how she puts God's words into practice and experiences them herself? Why would she explain God's words to the brothers and sisters line by line? Can fellowshipping that way allow them to understand the truth and know themselves?" I wanted to discuss the principles of fellowshipping God's words in gatherings with them, but then I thought: "I'm new to this church and Yao Lan has responsibility for my work. Her daughter Xiaomin is right

here, too. If I say that Yao Lan's way of fellowshiping God's words just amounts to explaining the literal meaning and that gets back to her, she may say that I'm trying to pick at her faults the moment I arrive, and think ill of me. It'll make things really awkward if I offend her." So I kept my mouth shut, and that was that.

One day, Sister Xiao got a letter to me behind Xiaomin's back. The letter said that she had previously made some suggestions to Yao Lan, but Yao Lan hadn't accepted them. Not only that, but Yao Lan started holding her back and wouldn't let her do her hosting duty anymore. I was really taken aback. I thought: "Sister Xiao must be wrong. How could Yao Lan oppress anyone?" I then sought out Xiaomin to get an idea of the situation. Xiaomin said that Sister Xiao was very enthusiastic, but often got things wrong in her understanding. She went on to say that Sister Xiao was well-known locally as a believer, that her home wasn't safe, and that she was lacking in wisdom to maintain a safe environment at home. She said quite a few negative things about Sister Xiao. I thought to myself: "If all that's true, then Sister Xiao really isn't suitable for hosting duty. But why would she say that Yao Lan was oppressive toward her? Maybe she has some sort of grievance against Yao Lan." I still felt uneasy, however, so I went to visit Sister Xiao at home. I discovered that her home was relatively suitable for hosting, and that she wasn't lacking in wisdom at all, so I began to feel puzzled. I wondered: "How can things be so different from what Xiaomin said? Has Yao Lan really been oppressing Sister Xiao?" When I asked Sister Xiao for further details, I learned that Yao Lan was using the need for a safe environment as an excuse, that she had stopped several deacons from performing their duties, and as a result brothers and sisters had no one to water them. They were not living a normal church life. When Sister Xiao raised this issue to Yao Lan, saying these arrangements were not

appropriate, Yao Lan not only refused to accept it, but took Sister Xiao's duty from her. She even kept Sister Xiao's letter reporting her problems under wraps. I was shocked to hear this. How could that be? Yao Lan was clearly in the wrong, yet she didn't accept what Sister Xiao said, and even trampled her and suppressed her letter. She was definitely not someone who accepted the truth! That once again brought to mind how she never talked about her own experiences and understanding when she gave fellowship on God's words, but instead took God's words out of context and misled the brothers and sisters. She went completely against the principles of fellowshipping God's words. I realized that she might have a real problem and that I had to report this to our superiors so that the work of God's house wouldn't be delayed. But then I thought: "According to what Sister Xiao said, Yao Lan is of poor humanity. She's in charge of my work at the moment, so if she finds out that it was me who reported her, she might oppress me and dismiss me from my duty." With a sigh, I decided that it was best not to say anything, but I also decided to arrange for Sister Xiao to resume hosting duty.

Unexpectedly, a few days later, Sister Chen also reported some of Yao Lan's evil-doing to me. She said that Brother Wang and his wife were new converts and were a little afraid due to the Chinese Communist Party's arrests and persecution, and so they didn't dare take on hosting duty. Not only had Yao Lan not fellowshipped on the truth to help them, but had reprimanded them and refused to allow anyone else to support them. In the end, Brother Wang and his wife sunk into negativity and didn't want to attend gatherings anymore. When Sister Chen told Yao Lan that this was no way to treat brothers and sisters, she didn't reflect on herself at all, but concocted some story about Sister Chen's security being compromised. Then she isolated Sister Chen from the church for several months, not

allowing her to participate in church life. There was also another sister who was performing watering duty. At gatherings, she would integrate God's words into her fellowship and be totally open and honest about which corrupt dispositions she had been revealing. Yao Lan leapt at this opportunity to dismiss her from her duty. She then promoted her own daughter, Xiaomin, to watering duty and told the brothers and sisters to train her daughter well, as she would be taking on important tasks in God's house in the future. Yao Lan also promoted her husband to team leader, when in fact he was no true believer, and was unable to fellowship anything of value in gatherings. Yao Lan acted on emotion and dragged her husband into the church, then assigned him to be a team leader—this was a serious violation of the administrative decrees. And her evildoing didn't stop there. Yao Lan and her daughter ruled over the church like monarchs, oppressing and ordering brothers and sisters around at will, until just the sight of her made them afraid and no one dared voice an opinion. As I listened to Sister Chen, I felt both shocked and indignant. When Yao Lan handed her work over to me at the start, I felt admiration for her when she said that all the work was going well. But it had all been lies. Not only did she quote God's words out of context during fellowship and mislead some of the brothers and sisters by preaching letters and doctrine, she also enjoyed the blessings of her position and bullied brothers and sisters. She even went so far as to rule the church despotically, to oppress others as she pleased, and dismiss people from their duties. She promoted and cultivated those closest to her, and engaged in nepotism. Her wanton and reckless behavior and her many evil deeds showed her to be a dyed-in-the-wool antichrist! Now the scope of her duty was even larger, so more brothers and sisters would surely be harmed. I knew I had to report her to a superior as soon as I could and uphold the work of the church. When I started to think about reporting her,

however, I began to worry: “Yao Lan is in charge of my work. If she finds out I’ve reported her, then, knowing how she behaves, she’ll most likely dismiss me from my post as church leader and send me home. She may even find some pretext to oppress and punish me. My life would become very difficult. What if I end up getting kicked out of the church? Then my journey of faith in God would be over. I need to be realistic. I’ll get church work sorted first and then see.” And so, in order to protect myself, I decided not to report and expose her. But at the next gathering I saw the expectant looks on all those oppressed brothers’ and sisters’ faces, I felt really distressed and my conscience was accused. Moreover, when I heard them talk about how Xiaomin was going around the church exalting Yao Lan’s ability to fellowship on the truth, and that she was constraining and lecturing brothers and sisters in a condescending way, I got even angrier. I thought to myself: “I must report Yao Lan and Xiaomin’s evildoing to a superior. I cannot allow them to act wickedly and oppress brothers and sisters however they please.” So, I wrote down everything the brothers and sisters told me about them. After the gathering, however, I felt conflicted again: What would Yao Lan do to punish me if she found out? But wouldn’t I be doing evil if I chose to protect myself and not expose those two? I was between a rock and a hard place and felt all tied up in knots, so tight that I could hardly breathe. In tears, I knelt down and prayed to God, saying, “Dear God, I want to report Yao Lan and her daughter to my leaders, but I’m afraid they’ll take revenge on me. Oh God, please guide me to break through the oppression of the forces of darkness, and to practice the truth and uphold the work of the church.”

After my prayer, I read this in God’s words: **“All of you say you are considerate of God’s burden and will defend the testimony of the church, but who among you has really been considerate of God’s**

burden? Ask yourself: Are you someone who has shown consideration for His burden? Can you practice righteousness for Him? Can you stand up and speak for Me? Can you steadfastly put the truth into practice? Are you bold enough to fight against all of Satan's deeds? Would you be able to set your emotions aside and expose Satan for the sake of My truth? Can you allow My intentions to be fulfilled in you? Have you offered up your heart in the most crucial of moments? Are you someone who does My will? Ask yourself these questions, and think about them often" (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 13).

I felt so ashamed of myself when I read these revelations in God's words. I believed in God, but God had no place in my heart. I was not taking God's commission seriously, and all I thought about in the face of problems was my own interests. I was not protecting the work of God's house at all. I'd clearly discovered that Yao Lan was explaining God's words by quoting them out of context, that she was domineering in the church, and that she was punishing and oppressing brothers and sisters. In order to promote those closest to her and consolidate her forces, she was dismissing people from their duties arbitrarily, severely disrupting and interfering with the church life and constraining and harming brothers and sisters. Especially now that the scope of her work had increased, she was in a position to harm even more brothers and sisters. But I had been afraid of Yao Lan's status and influence, afraid of being oppressed and dismissed by her, of losing my own position and future prospects, and of her and her daughter taking revenge on me and harming me, so I didn't dare hold to the principles and expose and report them. And so, with eyes wide open, I watched antichrists and wicked people run amok in the church. The brothers and sisters were being oppressed and their lives were being damaged, and yet I still didn't dare to stand up and expose Satan. What a

base, selfish, despicable person I was! I then read God's words that said: **"Mankind has been profoundly corrupted by Satan. Satan's venom flows through the blood of every person, and it can be seen that man's nature is corrupt, evil, and reactionary, filled by and immersed in the philosophies of Satan—it is, in its entirety, a nature that betrays God. This is why people resist God and stand in opposition to God"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. How to Know Man's Nature). **"As for what Satan's poison is, it can be fully expressed with words. For example, if you ask some evildoers why they committed evil, they will answer, 'Because it's every man for himself, and the devil take the hindmost.' This single phrase expresses the very root of the problem. Satan's logic has become people's lives. They may do things for this purpose or that, but they are only doing it for themselves. Everyone thinks that since it is every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost, people should live for their own sakes, and do everything in their power to secure a good position for the sake of food and fine clothing. 'Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost'—this is the life and the philosophy of man, and it also represents human nature. These words of Satan are precisely the poison of Satan, and when people internalize it, it becomes their nature. Satan's nature is exposed through these words; they represent it completely. This poison becomes people's lives as well as the foundation of their existence, and corrupted humanity has been consistently dominated by this poison for thousands of years"**

(The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. How to Walk the Path of Peter).

God's words showed me that I had been corrupted and trampled on by Satan, and that my very bones and blood had been saturated and infused with satanic poisons, philosophies, and codes, until I myself was becoming more and more evil and selfish. I was living by the satanic poisons of

“Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost,” “When you know something is wrong, it is better to say less,” and “Sensible people are good at self-protection, seeking only to avoid making mistakes.” My thoughts had all become twisted and I had terrible values and outlooks on life. I regarded my own interests, my future prospects, and my destiny as more important than anything else. Seeing Yao Lan and her gang of evil antichrist forces harming brothers and sisters in the church, I knew I had to expose and report them. But because I was afraid of being oppressed and of losing my position and future prospects, I didn’t dare do it, no matter how much I struggled over it. I therefore allowed antichrists to disrupt the church and I acted obsequiously, not daring to say one impartial word. I realized that I was so tightly bound and fettered by the poisons of Satan that I had become its accomplice, its running dog; this was loathsome for God, and I was unworthy to live before Him. I had enjoyed years of God’s work and guidance, and He had raised me up so I could perform my duty as a church leader. I, however, didn’t know to cherish it and gave no thought to how to care for brothers and sisters or uphold the work of God’s house. I lived wholly wrapped up in my own selfish desires, without a shred of dignity or integrity. I had failed to live up to the trust the brothers and sisters placed in me, and even more so, I had failed to live up to the commission God had given me. At this thought, I hated myself for being so selfish and despicable and I said a prayer to God, willing to repent. I asked God to give me strength and to guide me to break through these dark influences and be able to practice the truth.

After that, I read this in God’s words: **“The disposition of God is one that belongs to the Ruler of all things and living beings, to the Lord of all creation. His disposition represents honor, power, nobility, greatness, and most of all, supremacy. His disposition is the symbol of authority,**

the symbol of all that is righteous, the symbol of all that is beautiful and good. More than that, it is a symbol of Him who cannot be^[a] overcome or invaded by the darkness and any enemy force, as well as a symbol of Him who cannot be offended (nor will He tolerate being offended)^[b] by any created being. His disposition is the symbol of the highest power. No person or persons can or may disturb His work or His disposition”

(The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. It Is Very Important to Understand God's Disposition). I understood from God's words that God rules over all things, that His disposition is emblematic of the highest authority, and that no enemy force or force of darkness may offend it. God will purge from the church all the disruptive evil forces of Satan and utterly eliminate them. This is the direction of God's work and it is a reality that God will surely accomplish. Yao Lan had been ruling over the church like a tyrant, controlling and oppressing brothers and sisters, cultivating those closest to her and setting up her own kingdom. She had disrupted and interfered with God's work, done all manner of evil, and seriously offended God's disposition. She was an antichrist demon who would be expelled from the church sooner or later. I thought about how God's house had previously expelled so many evil people and antichrists: No matter how savage they were, they could only ever succeed for a little while, and in the end they could not escape God's punishment. Was this not God's righteousness? Yet I hadn't understood God's righteousness, and had not trusted in the fact that in God's house, the truth and righteousness held sway, that God reigned. I viewed the house of God as though it were the same as the world, as though whoever had status and power could control my fate, and if I got on the wrong side of Yao Lan and her daughter, I thought I'd lose my future prospects and destination. I was even afraid they would take revenge on me—I did not trust in God's rule over all things. This kind of faith was just a

disgrace to God! I read this in God's words after that: **"My words are the basis of man's escape from dark influences, and people who cannot practice in accordance with My words will not be able to escape from the bonds of the influence of darkness. To live in a correct state is to live under the guidance of the words of God, to live in a state of loyalty to God, to live in a state of seeking the truth, to live in the reality of sincerely expending oneself for God's sake, and to live in a state of genuinely loving God. Those who live in these states and within this reality will slowly transform as they enter into the depth of the truth, and they will transform as the work goes deeper; and in the end, they will certainly become people who are gained by God and who love God genuinely"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Escape From the Influence of Darkness, and You Will Be Gained by God). God's words showed me the path. If I wanted to break through the fetters of Satan's dark influence, I had to practice in accordance with God's words. I had to let go of my own personal interests and thoughts about my future, practice the truth, expose and report those antichrists, and uphold the work of God's house. Even if I was dismissed from my duty and lost my position and prospects, I had to stick to the truth principles. Once I'd understood this, I found my strength, and I wrote a letter to my leaders reporting Yao Lan and Xiaomin.

A couple of days later, the leaders convened all the brothers and sisters to uncover the facts of the evil deeds committed by Yao Lan and Xiaomin. In accordance with the principles, Yao Lan, her husband, and Xiaomin were all dismissed from their duties. Yao Lan and her daughter did not reflect on or attempt to know themselves, but instead visited brothers and sisters at their homes, feigning contrition, and even bemoaning how wrongfully they had been treated in an attempt to deceive the brothers and sisters. They were utterly unrepentant, and ultimately, because of their evil deeds, they

were determined to be antichrists and evildoers who had committed all manner of wickedness, and were expelled from the church. Church life returned to normal, brothers and sisters clapped and cheered, and everyone praised the righteousness and holiness of God. This helped me see even more clearly that righteousness and the truth hold sway in God's house, that Christ rules there, and that no matter how evil and rampant the antichrist evil forces are or how powerful they may be, they can never outmatch God's authority or disrupt God's work, much less control anyone's destiny. They are just like chess pieces in the hands of God, tools that serve to help God's chosen ones develop discernment. Their performances allow others to see antichrists and evil people for what they really are, so that they are not led astray. Through this experience of reporting these antichrists, it was the enlightenment, guidance, and leadership of God's words which enabled me to break through the forces of darkness and practice the truth. I felt at ease and at peace in my heart, and I felt that conducting myself in this way was the only way to live with dignity and integrity; I felt liberated and free. This was the fruit of writing an honest report.

All the glory be to Almighty God! Amen!

Footnotes:

- a. The original text reads "it is a symbol of being unable to be."
- b. The original text reads "as well as a symbol of being unable to be offended (and not tolerating being offended)."

60. God Is So Righteous

By Zhang Lin, Japan

In September 2012, I was in charge of church work when I met my leader Yan Zhuo. I found out she'd been asking brothers and sisters to preach the gospel door to door. This was a serious violation of principles. So my working partner and I said to her, "We have to abide by the principles of God's house when spreading the gospel. What you're doing now is at odds with them and if nonbelievers or evildoers end up in the Church, then that will disrupt the work of God's house. Anyway, it's dangerous to preach the gospel like that. If someone calls the police, then you'll have thrown our brothers and sisters to the lions." She not only paid no mind but accused us of being sticklers for the rules. In gatherings after that, she'd often scold me and my working partner, saying we were obstructing the gospel work of God's house. We both felt really constrained by her. In December that year, our regional members went out preaching the gospel as Yan Zhuo told them to and over 100 people got arrested. This was a great blow to the work of God's house, but Yan Zhuo was totally unrepentant. I never once saw her dissect or reflect deeply on her arrogance or recklessness. By November 2013, I was in charge of making church videos. I noticed she was still just arrogantly doing whatever she wanted. She would scold and condemn anyone who expressed a different opinion. She repeatedly held back videos brothers and sisters submitted for review, which meant they couldn't get timely pointers or help from God's house. I pointed out to her some things that were lacking in how she did her duty and made some suggestions, but she just carried on as before. She didn't listen, and said I was the arrogant one. In May 2014, she had me dismissed and sent back home. After I got home, I just happened to read some

principles about discerning antichrists and false leaders. Comparing Yan Zhuo's consistent behavior to them, I finally realized just how arrogant and malicious she really was. She was always wanton and dictatorial in her duty. She didn't accept the truth or suggestions from brothers and sisters, but instead suppressed and condemned people. Didn't her behavior show her to be an antichrist who hated the truth? Seeing her behavior for what it was, I felt shocked. Over the two years we'd worked together, I'd seen her behavior and approach, but I took it all for expressions of corruption. I never used God's words to dissect her nature, her essence, or the path she was following. So whenever I was around her, I just had to keep being tolerant and patient, which ended up delaying and impacting the work of God's house. I thought, "If Yan Zhuo continues as a church leader, she'll disrupt the work of God's house even more." I decided to report her issues to God's house. I said a prayer to God and wrote a letter reporting her. At the end of the letter, I added one last thing. I knew at that time there was a video that had some problems with it, so I asked God's house to look into the matter and review it.

Just as I was about to send off the completed letter, I began to get second thoughts. I thought, "I've given her suggestions before and pointed out problems in her duty, but it didn't go over well and she sent me home. Now I can't even do my duty. If I send this letter reporting her issues and by some chance she ends up reading it, she'll accuse me of attacking leaders and workers, and then where will I be? I should just forget it. Since I'm already out the door, I may as well not stir things up." But then I thought: "God has guided me today to see that Yan Zhuo walks the path of the antichrists. If I don't report this, it'll be the work of God's house and the brothers and sisters that suffer. Won't I then be Satan's aide and an evildoer?" I felt really conflicted with the interests of God's house and the

brothers and sisters on one side and my own future prospects on the other. I just didn't know what to do. For a few days, I often came before God to pray, asking Him to guide me onto the right path. I later read a passage of God's words: **"You must have aspirations and the courage to be made perfect, and should not always think yourself incapable. Does the truth have favorites? Can the truth deliberately oppose people? If you pursue the truth, can it overwhelm you? If you stand firm for justice, will it knock you down? If it is truly your aspiration to pursue life, can life elude you? If you are without the truth, that is not because the truth ignores you, but because you stay away from the truth; if you cannot stand fast for justice, that is not because there is something wrong with justice, but because you believe it is out of line with the facts; if you have not gained life after pursuing it for many years, that is not because life has no conscience toward you, but because you have no conscience toward life, and have driven away life; if you live in the light, and have been incapable of gaining the light, that is not because the light is unable to illuminate you, but because you have not paid any attention to the existence of the light, and so the light has quietly departed from you. If you do not pursue, then it can only be said that you are worthless trash, and have no courage in your life, and do not have the spirit to resist the forces of darkness. You are too weak! You are unable to escape the forces of Satan that lay siege to you, and are only willing to lead this kind of safe and secure life and die in ignorance. What you should achieve is your pursuit of being conquered; this is your bounden duty. If you are content to be conquered, then you drive out the existence of the light. You must suffer hardship for the truth, you must give yourself to the truth, you must endure humiliation for the truth, and to gain more of the truth**

you must undergo more suffering. This is what you should do” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Experiences of Peter: His Knowledge of Chastisement and Judgment). Reading this passage gave me faith and strength. “Yes,” I thought. “I can’t let this dark force defeat me.” I never had discernment on Yan Zhuo before. But now God had arranged things so I could see her nature, her essence, and the path she followed. I should have taken a stand and blown the whistle, but instead I heeded Satan’s philosophy “Let things drift if they do not affect one personally” for the sake of my own future prospects. I saw just how selfish I was, devoid of conscience or reason. I thought of all the years I’d believed in God and enjoyed the watering and sustenance of God’s words. Yet at this crucial time, I was ignoring my conscience to protect my interests and turning a blind eye to the interests of God’s house. What an ungrateful, mean, and despicable person I was! Realizing this, I thought: “I must act with conscience and a sense of justice, practice the truth and protect the work of God’s house.” So I came before God again many times in prayer and finally made this resolution: “Whatever the consequences of writing this report letter, I cannot be an aide to Satan just to protect my own interests. I’ve seen Yan Zhuo’s issues, so I should take a stand, expose her evil deeds, and protect the work of God’s house.” I then sent the report to God’s house. I felt so relieved afterward and had such a sense of peace in my heart. I waited anxiously every day after that for God’s house to send someone to investigate the situation with Yan Zhuo and for the brothers and sisters to see that antichrist for what she was and reject her. Unfortunately, my situation got even worse due to that letter.

In August 2014, the church agreed to allow me to perform my duty again. But one day in mid-October, a leader surnamed Li came to the hosting home I was staying at. With a stern look on her face, she asked,

“Did you write a report letter before?” I said I had. Looking displeased, she said, “Yan Zhuo is in charge of the church’s work and I’m often in contact with her. I’ve never noticed or heard any indication that she behaves like a false leader or an antichrist. That letter you wrote was just a random attack on leaders and workers.” I couldn’t believe my ears when she said that. I never could’ve imagined such an outcome after waiting four months. I remained calm in spite of what she said. I knew I’d written that letter about Yan Zhuo according to the facts and principles. No way was it a false accusation. Leader Li then said, “Your report letter mentioned checking out some video, so God’s house spent two months on investigations and reviews. It has profoundly disrupted the work of God’s house and offended God’s disposition.” She also said that was what the senior leaders said. These remarks left me reeling in a state of shock. I never imagined my letter would’ve caused such severe disruption to the work of God’s house and offended God’s disposition. If things were as she said, then I really had committed a great evil. I suddenly felt sapped of all energy and couldn’t stop myself from crying. Leader Li then said, “Get your things, go home, and reflect on what you’ve done. Once you’re done reflecting, you can start doing your duty again.” I sat on the bus home with my mind in a whirl and a great weight on my heart. I’d believed in God for so many years, yet I’d become an evildoer who’d severely disrupted the work of God’s house. I was consumed with self-blame and remorse and had no idea what the future might hold for me. I called on God and asked Him to protect my heart. No matter how God dealt with me, I would obey His arrangements. I’d never blame God. After praying, I gradually calmed down. Three days after I got home, I thought about what Li had said and I began to have some questions: Christ and the truth rule in God’s house, and there are principles to everything it does, including how it handles people. It wouldn’t just go by

some temporary behavior in a person. So what principles were Li and the others going by to treat me this way? Was what Leader Li said really true? I just couldn't figure it out, but I knew that whatever the truth was, God was allowing it all to happen so I had to submit to His arrangements. It wasn't long before a church leader assigned me to a group for gatherings. More than a month after that, I was assigned to attend gatherings at home with my mom, and we weren't allowed to do our duties anymore. I knew then that we were being ostracized. I thought about how I'd believed in God all this time, but now not only was I being isolated at home, but I couldn't even do my duty anymore. I felt so bereft. During that time, I dreamed almost every night of gathering and doing duty with my brothers and sisters. I'd wake up and I wouldn't be able to sleep again. Every night felt so long, so unbearable. My mom suffered alongside me during those days. Especially when I heard her crying at night as she prayed to God, I would blame myself and feel really low. I felt like I'd brought it on her. Those days were the most painful and the hardest I'd been through since I started believing in God. Besides constantly praying to God, I had no other way to relieve the pain in my heart. I later asked my church leader whether I could go do my duty again. She said, "You still want to do your duty? If you don't reflect on yourself as you should, you'll end up expelled!" Hearing her say this, I felt overwhelmed with despair. I knew then that doing my duty was nothing more than a pipe dream. The leaders came to our house for a meeting every week, but really they just came to ask about me to see if I'd been spreading negativity or forming cliques. So every time they came to ask about me, I would get incredibly depressed. Sometimes I wanted to ask them, "Why are you treating me this way? I reported Yan Zhuo based on the principles. But instead of investigating her, you've kept me at home. Is there something wrong with practicing the truth?" I felt really upset. Sometimes, I would

think: “Why has practicing the truth led to this? I believe God is righteous, but I can’t see His righteousness in what’s happening now.” I was so confused. I was just holding on to the bare minimum, not speaking sinfully or blaming God. I often came before God to pray, asking Him to guide me to understand His will and not misunderstand Him.

It was at that hardest, most painful of times that I read some of God’s words. **“Exactly how should people come to know and grasp God’s righteous disposition? When the righteous receive His blessings and when the wicked are cursed by Him—these are examples of God’s righteousness. Is this correct? It is said that God rewards good and punishes evil, and that He recompenses every man according to his deeds. That is correct, is it not? These days, however, those who worship God are killed or cursed, or have never been blessed or acknowledged by Him; no matter how much they worship Him, He ignores them. God neither blesses the wicked, nor punishes them, yet they are rich and have many offspring, and all goes well for them; they are successful in everything. Is this God’s righteousness? As a result, some people say, ‘God is not righteous. We worship Him, but He has never blessed us, whereas in all things, the wicked who resist and do not worship Him are better off and have higher positions than we. God is not righteous!’ What does this show you? I just gave you two examples. Which one speaks to God’s righteousness? Some people say, ‘They are both manifestations of God’s righteousness!’ Why do they say this? People’s knowledge of God’s disposition is erroneous; it exists amongst their own thoughts and viewpoints, within a transactional perspective, or within a perspective of good and evil, a perspective of right and wrong, or a logical perspective. These are the perspectives they bring to their knowledge of God; such people are incompatible**

with God, and are bound to resist Him and complain about Him” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. How to Know God’s Righteous Disposition).

“God will do what He ought to do, and His disposition is righteous. Righteousness is by no means fair or reasonable; it is not egalitarianism, or a matter of allocating to you what you deserve in accordance with how much work you have completed, or paying you for whatever work you have done, or giving you your due according to what effort you expend. This is not righteousness. Suppose God had eliminated Job after Job bore witness for Him: God would have been righteous then, too. Why is this called righteousness? From a human point of view, if something is in line with people’s notions, it is then very easy for them to say that God is righteous; however, if they do not see that thing as being in line with their notions—if it is something that they are incapable of comprehending—then it would be difficult for them to say that God is righteous. ... God’s essence is righteousness. Though it is not easy to comprehend what He does, all that He does is righteous; it is simply that people do not understand. When God gave Peter to Satan, how did Peter respond? ‘Mankind is unable to fathom what You do, but all of what You do contains Your good will; there is righteousness in all of it. How can I not utter praise for Your wise deeds?’ Today, you should see that God does not destroy Satan in order to show humans how Satan has corrupted them and how God saves them; ultimately, due to the degree to which Satan has corrupted people, they shall behold the monstrous sin of Satan’s corruption of them, and when God destroys Satan, they shall behold God’s righteousness and see that it contains God’s disposition. Everything that God does is righteous. Though it might be unfathomable to you,

you should not make judgments at will. If something He does appears to you as unreasonable, or if you have any notions about it, and that leads you to say that He is not righteous, then you are being most unreasonable. You see that Peter found some things to be incomprehensible, but he was sure that God's wisdom was present and that His good will was in those things. Humans cannot fathom everything; there are so many things that they cannot grasp. Thus, to know God's disposition is not an easy thing" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. How to Know God's Righteous Disposition). God's words shone like a lantern in the dark and I suddenly understood. I couldn't see God's righteousness because I'd been trying to understand it using my notions and imaginings. When I saw those antichrists and false leaders disrupting the work of God's house, I believed that truthfully reporting them was a good and righteous deed that should earn me God's favor and protection. I thought they'd be handled right away, and only that was God's righteousness. But after I reported these issues, they kept their positions and still acted wantonly, while I was the one stifled and ostracized. I'd begun to doubt God's righteousness at that point. After reading God's words, I finally understood that God's essence is righteous. Whether His actions meet with our notions or not, they always express His righteousness. It's just like Job's trials. He was a perfect man in God's eyes, but God handed him over to Satan and took away all his wealth and children. This was God's righteousness. Job feared God and shunned evil and he relied on his faith to bear staunch, resounding witness to God. God then blessed him with a long life and much more wealth, and better children, too. This was also God's righteousness. Suppose after Job bore witness to God, God didn't bless him, but destroyed him instead. That would've been God's righteousness, too. God's essence and disposition are inherently righteous so everything He

does is righteous. I then thought about Peter who went through several hundred trials and refinements, but still praised God's righteousness. He couldn't understand everything that happened, but he trusted that God's righteousness and wisdom were behind it all. Then there's me—I didn't truly understand God's righteousness but instead appraised it by how things appeared and whether the outcome accorded with my notions or not. When what God did fit my notions and benefited me, I believed in His righteousness. But when He arranged situations that didn't benefit me, I began to doubt His righteousness, believing the things He'd arranged to be unfair. Although I never blamed God openly, I was constantly arguing with Him in my heart. I saw just how senseless I'd been. God wasn't being unrighteous. It was me who didn't understand God. I was being too selfish and deceitful. I wasn't seeking the truth or learning from the situation He'd arranged for me. Instead, I was arguing and obsessing over my own future and interests, so how could I not feel terrible and fall into darkness and pain? I finally understood God's will. God was using this situation to remedy my wrong views so that I wasn't trying to understand His righteousness through my own notions anymore. I felt like I finally understood what was happening. I came before God in prayer, willing to submit to His arrangements and understand Him in this situation.

I then read these words of God: **“Most people do not understand God's work. It is indeed not an easy thing to understand; one must first know that there is a plan to all God's work and it is all done on God's time. Man is eternally unable to fathom what and when God works; God does certain work at a certain time, and He does not delay; no one can destroy His work. To work according to His plan and according to His intention is the principle by which He does His work, and no person can change this. Therein, you should see God's disposition”** (The

Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only by Knowing God's Almightyness Can You Have a True Belief). **"Everything that God does is necessary and possessed of extraordinary significance, for all that He does in man concerns His management and the salvation of mankind. Naturally, the work that God did in Job is no different, even though Job was perfect and upright in the eyes of God. In other words, regardless of what God does or the means by which He does it, regardless of the cost, regardless of His objective, the purpose of His actions does not change. His purpose is to work God's words into man, as well as God's requirements and will for man; in other words, it is to work into man all that God believes to be positive in accordance with His steps, enabling man to understand God's heart and comprehend God's essence, and allowing man to obey God's sovereignty and arrangements, thus allowing man to attain fear of God and shunning of evil—all of this is one aspect of God's purpose in all He does. The other aspect is that, because Satan is the foil and service object in God's work, man is often given to Satan; this is the means God uses to allow people to see in Satan's temptations and attacks the wickedness, ugliness, and contemptibility of Satan, thus causing people to hate Satan and be able to know and recognize that which is negative. This process allows them to gradually free themselves from Satan's control and accusations, interference, and attacks—until, thanks to God's words, their knowledge and obedience of God, and their faith in God and fear of Him, they triumph over the attacks and accusations of Satan; only then will they have been completely delivered from the domain of Satan"** (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God's Work, God's Disposition, and God Himself II). God's words showed me that He acts with principle and always in His own good time, and His righteousness and wisdom are behind

all this. I'd imagined that God's righteousness meant immediate retribution and that evildoers should be punished right away. But if things happened as I imagined, then how would God expose all kinds of people and allow His chosen ones to gain discernment? God actually allows antichrists and false leaders to arise in the church in order to use these people to help us grow in life, to drive us to seek the truth and develop discernment. When we're able to discern these people using the principles of the truth is when we understand and enter into the truth. When that happens, the antichrists and false leaders have served their purpose. Although some antichrists and false leaders were in positions of power in the church at that time and seemed able to control and deceive some people, Christ and the truth still reigned in the church so they'd all be exposed and cast out sooner or later.

I also realized just how insidious and malicious antichrists' nature is, and that they are totally devoid of humanity. They care only about prestige and status and not about God's chosen at all. Whoever infringes on their interests becomes a thorn in their side. They'll attack and take revenge on that person, not stopping until they're done in. They behave exactly as the devil Satan does. Until antichrists are expelled, God's chosen won't have a moment's rest to live the church life or do their duty. God had allowed this to happen to me so that I could really see from these people just how they deceived and harmed others, recognize their nature and essence, discern their heretical fallacies and escape their control and deception. God also wanted me to learn from their mistakes so that I wouldn't take the wrong path. All this showed me God truly was arranging this situation to save and perfect me. As God's words say: **“With the service of many contrary and negative things, and by employing all sorts of Satan's manifestations—its actions, its accusations, its disturbances and deceptions—God shows you Satan's hideous face clearly, and thereby perfects your ability to**

distinguish Satan, that you may hate Satan and forsake it” (The Word, Vol.

1. The Appearance and Work of God. Those Who Are to Be Made Perfect Must Undergo Refinement). I thanked God for guiding me to understand His painstaking efforts and for leading me out from the dark.

In January 2015, I wrote another letter reporting Yan Zhuo. I waited anxiously again every day for God’s house to send someone to investigate her. But two months went by and I was still waiting for someone to come look into it. Our church leader came to question me repeatedly, “Have you got some problem with God or with God’s house?” I began to feel worried when she said that and wondered what would happen to me now that I’d written that letter. I thought, “I’m already being isolated, so if anything else happens, I’m bound to be expelled from the church.” I suddenly realized that I’d begun to doubt God’s righteousness again. I hurriedly came before God to pray, “Dear God, I verbally acknowledge Your righteousness and I believe Christ and the truth rule in God’s house. But when tested by time and facts, I see how little faith I have and that I still don’t truly understand Your righteousness. I wish now to let go of my interests and submit to Your arrangements. Please guide me to understand Your will.” I then read a passage of God’s words, **“For everyone who aspires to love God, there are no unobtainable truths and no justice for which they cannot stand firm. How should you live your life? How should you love God, and use this love to satisfy His desire? There is no greater matter in your life. Above all, you must have such aspirations and perseverance, and should not be like those who are spineless, those who are weaklings. You must learn how to experience a meaningful life and experience meaningful truths, and should not treat yourself perfunctorily in that way. Without you realizing it, your life will pass you by; after that, will you have another opportunity to love God? Can man love God after he**

is dead? You must have the same aspirations and conscience as Peter; your life must be meaningful, and you must not play games with yourself' (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Experiences of Peter: His Knowledge of Chastisement and Judgment). God's words showed me that what He perfects is our yearning for the truth and righteousness, and our resolve to love God. No matter what hardships, setbacks, or attacks we encounter, we can't retreat, but should live for God and the truth. We cannot bow to any force of Satan. Only then can we gain the truth and be perfected. I just didn't possess that kind of resolve and willpower. Although I'd prayed and resolved to God to protect the work of His house and practice the truth, the moment I saw evil forces arising, I became afraid to be stifled and chickened out. I realized I still didn't truly understand God's righteousness and I only thought of myself when things happened. Something God said then came to mind: **"The wicked will surely be punished."** God means what He says, what He says shall be done, and what He does shall last forever. Every evildoer will suffer the punishment of God's righteousness. No matter how long it takes or how it happens, things will always turn out as God's words say in the end. So I thought, "I have to let go of my notions, forsake my deceitful satanic disposition, trust in God's words and trust that God is righteous. I won't bow to any force of Satan!" Once I'd realized this, I gradually calmed down and stopped worrying.

By April 2015, I was receiving letters from Leader Li and other leaders and workers about how Yan Zhuo had pulled the wool over their eyes, and how they had caused me great harm. They all apologized. In her letter, Leader Li admitted, "It wasn't the senior leaders who accused you of severely disrupting church work, it was Yan Zhuo." I knew then that Yan Zhuo had read both of my letters reporting her. To save her own skin, she'd been preparing evidence to get me expelled, but then some leaders and

workers saw her issues, so they sent a joint letter to God's house reporting her. As I read through all these letters, I breathed a huge sigh of relief. I knelt before God and cried. I felt so indebted to God in that moment. I'd believed in God for so many years but had always seen His righteousness through the lens of my imagination. When issues cropped up, I tried to fit them into what I imagined, and when that didn't work, I misunderstood and blamed God. But He disregarded my weakness and corruption and guided me through that most painful, unbearable time. This experience showed me that God was using this spiritual battle of discerning and reporting those false leaders to remedy my misguided notions and give me true understanding of His righteousness. I also came to realize that I was looking at everything God did through the lens of my imagination. I was actually blaspheming and delimiting God, and I offended His disposition. This experience showed me that God's essence is righteous. Everything God says and does, whether it meets with people's notions or not, is a revelation of His righteous disposition. Almighty God says, **"God's righteous disposition is God's own true essence. It is not something written or shaped by man. His righteous disposition is His righteous disposition and has no relation or connection to anything of creation. God Himself is God Himself. He will never become a part of creation, and even if He becomes a member of the created beings, His inherent disposition and essence will not change. Therefore, knowing God is not the same as knowing an object; to know God is not to dissect something, nor is it the same as understanding a person. If man uses his concept or method of knowing an object or understanding a person to know God, then you will never be able to attain knowledge of God. Knowing God is not reliant on experience or imagination, and therefore you must never impose your experience or imagination on God; no matter how rich**

your experience and imagination may be, they are still limited. What is more, your imagination does not correspond to facts, and much less to the truth, and it is incompatible with God's true disposition and essence. You will never succeed if you rely on your imagination to understand God's essence. The only path is this: Accept all that comes from God, then gradually experience and understand it. There will be a day when God will enlighten you to truly understand and know Him because of your cooperation and because of your hunger and thirst for the truth" (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique II).

In May 2015, the antichrist Yan Zhuo was expelled from the Church for doing a great deal of evil. Her cronies and accomplices were also dealt with. When I read that notice of expulsion, I felt from the bottom of my heart how truly righteous God is! The truth and Christ rule in God's house! Thank God!

61. The Truth Has Shown Me the Way

By Shizai, Japan

Almighty God says, **“Serving God is no simple task. Those whose corrupt disposition remains unchanged can never serve God. If your disposition has not been judged and chastised by God’s words, then your disposition still represents Satan, which proves that you serve God out of your own good intentions, that your service is based on your satanic nature. You serve God with your natural character, and according to your personal preferences. What’s more, you always think that the things you are willing to do are what are delightful to God, and that the things you do not wish to do are what are hateful to God; you work entirely according to your own preferences. Can this be called serving God? Ultimately, there will not be the slightest change in your life disposition; instead, your service will make you even more stubborn, thus deeply ingraining your corrupt disposition, and as such, there will be formed within you rules about service to God that are primarily based on your own character, and experiences derived from your service according to your own disposition. These are the experiences and lessons of man. It is man’s philosophy of living in the world. People like this can be classed as Pharisees and religious officials. If they never wake up and repent, then they will surely turn into the false Christs and the antichrists who deceive people in the last days. The false Christs and the antichrists that were spoken of will arise from among such people”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Religious Service Must Be Purged). Reading this passage of God’s words brings to mind an experience I had five years back. I had just been elected as a church leader. I was really enthusiastic and took my duty seriously. I was

determined to handle the church's work well. When I started taking stock of all the teams' work situations, I found that some team members weren't right for the job, and team leaders weren't correcting this. Some didn't have a grasp of the principles and their leaders weren't providing fellowship and help quickly enough, which impacted the church's work. This really concerned me, and I thought, "Such blatant problems are being left unresolved. They clearly aren't responsible in their work. I really have to give them a good talking to in the next gathering and make absolutely sure they know where they're going wrong." In the next gathering, I repeatedly asked those team leaders about their work and pointed out the faults and issues I'd seen. Even though they knew they weren't doing practical work and were willing to change, I still wasn't satisfied. I thought that if I wasn't stern, really dissecting it and dealing with them, nothing would come of it. With a scolding tone, I said they were perfunctory in their duties and weren't resolving practical problems, that this was disrupting the church's work, and so on. After I was done, I didn't ask them how they felt, but just patted myself on the back, thinking that I'd found problems and then fixed them. But a couple of days later, a co-worker said to me, "A team leader said he's afraid to see you, that he thinks you'll deal with him if you see issues in his work." Hearing this upset me a little, but I immediately thought that I'd done just what was needed, that it was to discover problems and then set them right, and dealing with them was so that they'd learn a lesson. I didn't think anything of it. In the next meeting with team leaders, I kept sternly inquiring after their work, then dealt with them and dissected things when I found an issue. I also said self-assuredly, "Some brothers and sisters are afraid of being questioned about their work. What is there to be afraid of if you're doing practical work? It's only by learning about your work that problems can be found and corrected in time." After the gathering I heard a

team leader say, “I’m still learning how to do my duty and I have a lot of difficulties. I wanted to get them resolved through fellowship in our gathering, but instead, I’m just more stressed.” Hearing this was a little upsetting for me and I felt it was partly my fault that the gathering had not been fruitful. But I thought it was probably just because my stature was small and my fellowship hadn’t been clear. It was normal for a new team leader to feel a lot of pressure. I just shot back, “Stress is motivating. It wouldn’t be right if you didn’t feel that way.” A co-worker later learned that team leaders were afraid to see me and be dealt with by me, and cautioned, “Dealing with people that way is done out of temper. It’s not edifying for brothers and sisters. We should fellowship the truth more to resolve their issues and difficulties.” I still didn’t think anything of it, believing that my motives were correct and that even if I was a bit harsh, I was just taking responsibility for my work. So in spite of repeated warnings from my co-workers, I never came before God to reflect on myself. I gradually came to feel a darkness growing in my spirit, and I couldn’t perceive the Holy Spirit’s work. I was suffering and in pain. Only then did I come before God and reflect on myself: “Why haven’t I achieved anything in my duty, but I’m always hitting walls? Why do brothers and sisters always say they’re constrained by me? Is it really like what my co-workers say, that I’m dealing with people out of temper? But, I only say things sternly so the church’s work will be done well. If I didn’t, would brothers and sisters realize how serious these issues are?” Even through this torment, I was trying to justify myself. I was really suffering.

After praying, I read these words of God: **“As leaders and workers in the church, if you want to lead God’s chosen people into truth reality and to serve as God’s witnesses, most importantly, you must have a deeper understanding of God’s aim in saving people and the purpose of**

His work. You must understand the will of God and His various requirements of people. You must be practical in your efforts; practice only as much as you understand and communicate only on that which you know. Do not boast, do not exaggerate, and do not make irresponsible remarks. If you exaggerate, people will detest you and you will feel reproached afterward; this is just too inappropriate. When you provide the truth to others, you don't necessarily have to deal with them and scold them in order for them to attain the truth. If you yourself don't have the truth and only deal with and scold others, they will fear you, but that doesn't mean they understand the truth. In some administrative work, it's fine for you to deal with and prune others and discipline them to a certain degree. But if you cannot provide the truth and know only how to be overbearing and to chide others, your corruption and ugliness will be revealed. With the passage of time, as people are unable to obtain the provision of life or practical things from you, they will come to detest you and feel disgusted by you. Those who lack discernment will learn negative things from you; they will learn to deal with and prune others, to get angry, and to lose their temper. Isn't that tantamount to leading others onto the path of Paul, onto a path toward perdition? Is that not an evildoing? Your work should focus on communicating the truth and providing life to others. If all you do is blindly deal with and lecture others, how will they ever understand the truth? As time goes by, people will see you for who you really are, and they will abandon you. How can you expect to bring others before God in this way? How is this doing the work? You will lose everyone if you keep working in this way. What work do you hope to accomplish anyway? Some leaders are incapable of communicating the truth to resolve problems. Instead, they just blindly deal with others and flaunt

their power so that others come to fear them and obey them—such people are of the false leaders and antichrists. Those whose disposition has not changed are incapable of performing church work, and are unable to serve God” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only Those With Truth Reality Can Lead). God’s words perfectly exposed my own state. That’s exactly how I was doing my duty. Instead of focusing on fellowship on the truth to handle problems, I was dealing with, scolding, and reprimanding others out of temper. As a result, they were constrained, afraid, and they avoided me. I also disgusted God because I was living within my corrupt disposition. I’d lost the Holy Spirit’s work and sunk into darkness. Thinking back on that time, when I found problems in brothers’ and sisters’ duties, I rarely sought the truth or found words of God for specific fellowship, and I really wasn’t directing them toward a path of practice. I was just chiding them and reprimanding them with my arrogant disposition. When I saw that they were feeling stifled by me, I still didn’t reflect on myself. I thought I was taking responsibility in my duty, that I was being considerate of God’s will and resolving practical problems. God cautioned me through my co-workers not to arbitrarily deal with people out of temper, but I’d ignored that. As a result, some brothers and sisters had become negative. They were scared of me and avoided me. The church’s work wasn’t going well, either. God clearly requires that leaders and workers do their work primarily through fellowship on the truth. Brothers and sisters have to understand the truth before they can recognize their corrupt dispositions and the truth of their corruption, and only then are they driven to practice God’s words and do their duties well. But I thought I had to be harsh in my work, that when I discovered issues I had to relentlessly scold and reprimand them, and that would be the only way for them to see their problems and rectify them. I thought it was the only way to achieve

results. I saw then how truly absurd that perspective was! By working that way, I was taking advantage of my position and arrogantly chiding and constraining people. I wasn't resolving others' problems with fellowship on the truth. God requires that leaders use fellowship on the truth to resolve brothers' and sisters' problems, that they're on an equal footing with everyone, that they fellowship on God's words based on people's actual difficulties, and share fellowship on their own experience and understanding to guide and help others. If they do deal with or expose someone, it has to be on the foundation of fellowship on the truth, and they have to highlight the essence and key points of a problem so that people understand what God requires, so they can clearly see their own problems, the nature of their problems, the dangerous consequences of their problems, and so that they know what to do to be in line with the truth and how to do their duty as God requires. But I hadn't done my duty as God required. I didn't listen to my co-workers' reminders, much less reflect on the nature and consequences of me scolding people based on my satanic disposition in my duty. I justified it to myself, saying it was for their own good, and for the church's work. I wasn't on the right path in my duty, and not only was I not benefiting others at all, but I was actually constraining them. They were all miserable and stifled. Wasn't I doing them harm? I was doing evil! I never thought that doing my duty based on my satanic disposition would have such serious consequences. I really regretted dealing with them and scolding them that way. I quickly came before God in prayer and seeking, and thought: What exactly had made me commit evil without even knowing it?

After that, I read this in God's words: **"If you really possess the truth within you, the path you walk will naturally be the correct path. Without the truth, it is easy to do evil, and you will do it despite**

yourself. For example, if arrogance and conceit existed within you, you would find it impossible to keep from defying God; you would feel compelled to defy Him. You would not do it on purpose; you would do it under the domination of your arrogant and conceited nature. Your arrogance and conceit would make you look down on God and see Him as being of no account; they would cause you to exalt yourself, constantly put yourself on display, and, finally, sit in God's place and bear testimony for yourself. In the end, you would turn your own ideas, your own thinking, and your own notions into truths to be worshiped. See how much evil is done by people under the dominance of their arrogant and conceited nature!" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only by Pursuing the Truth Can One Achieve a Change in Disposition). God's words revealed the root of my evil-doing: I was being controlled by my arrogant and conceited nature. Because of my arrogant, conceited nature, I always thought I was more responsible than others, so I lorded over them. When there were mistakes or oversights in brothers' and sisters' work, I looked down on them, using my position to scold and deal with them. I wasn't understanding or sympathetic. Controlled by this arrogant nature, I also had total confidence in myself, thinking that the only way to resolve problems was to deal with people sternly. I presented my own notions and imaginings as the truth. Even when I saw the way I worked was stifling for others, I was still set in my ways, unwilling to listen to brothers and sisters. Even when my co-workers cautioned me, I still wouldn't reflect on myself. I thought I'd just used a slightly harsh tone, and they couldn't handle being dealt with. I'd been doing my duty based on my arrogant, satanic disposition, doing harm to brothers and sisters and delaying the church's work. All I'd done was the evil of resisting God!

I later read these words from God: **“You serve God with your natural character, and according to your personal preferences. What’s more, you always think that the things you are willing to do are what are delightful to God, and that the things you do not wish to do are what are hateful to God; you work entirely according to your own preferences. Can this be called serving God? Ultimately, there will not be the slightest change in your life disposition; instead, your service will make you even more stubborn, thus deeply ingraining your corrupt disposition, and as such, there will be formed within you rules about service to God that are primarily based on your own character, and experiences derived from your service according to your own disposition. These are the experiences and lessons of man. It is man’s philosophy of living in the world. People like this can be classed as Pharisees and religious officials. If they never wake up and repent, then they will surely turn into the false Christs and the antichrists who deceive people in the last days. The false Christs and the antichrists that were spoken of will arise from among such people. If those who serve God follow their own character and act according to their own will, they run the risk of being cast out at any time. Those who apply their many years of experience acquired to serving God in order to win the hearts of others, to lecture them and control them, and to stand on high—and who never repent, never confess their sins, never renounce the benefits of position—these people shall fall before God. They are of the same kind as Paul, presuming upon their seniority and flaunting their qualifications. God will not bring people like this to perfection. Such service interferes with the work of God”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Religious Service Must Be Purged). These words cut me to the quick, and I could feel that God’s disposition tolerates no offense. I saw that in my

years of faith, I hadn't focused on seeking the principles of the truth, but I'd just been doing my duty my own way. I was unbridled in my arrogant disposition, scolding and constraining people from my position of power, and I ended up constraining my brothers and sisters. They were stifled and in pain. I was so lacking in humanity. I'd not only failed to resolve brothers' and sisters' practical problems, but I'd hindered their life entry and held up the church's work. How was that doing my duty? Wasn't I acting as Satan's minion? I always used to think my motives were correct, that I cared about the church's work, but then I saw that having a little enthusiasm and knowing a bit of doctrine wasn't enough to satisfy God with my duty. Without accepting the judgment and chastisement of God's words, my satanic disposition couldn't change, and then my duty wouldn't accord with God's will. I'd just do evil and resist God in spite of myself. I thought of the false leaders and antichrists who had been eliminated. They didn't accept the judgment and chastisement of God's words or practice the truth, but did their duty with their satanic dispositions, so arrogant, conceited and haughty, arbitrarily dealing with and scolding people, standing on high, being tyrannical. Their impact on others was nothing but harmful, and they did nothing but tear down and disrupt the church's work. Their work was nothing but doing evil and resisting God! It's just as the Lord Jesus said: **"Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name? And in Your name have cast out devils? and in Your name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess to them, I never knew you: depart from Me, you that work iniquity"** (Matthew 7:22–23). This left me feeling a little afraid. If I kept doing my duty relying on my satanic disposition, then I would only disrupt the church's work and be condemned and eliminated by God, just like those other evildoers who resisted God. I then realized that the church life and my duty being fruitless

was God exposing me, and that I should come before God to reflect on myself and repent to Him. I was so arrogant, and without the judgment and exposure of God's words and what the facts revealed, I never could have submitted. I never would have seen the dangerous consequences of doing my duty by my satanic disposition. I was really moved just then, and I felt I couldn't go on like that. I had to seek the truth to resolve my corruption.

I then read this in God's words: **"When an issue befalls you, you must have a cool head and a correct approach, and you must make a choice. You should learn to use the truth to resolve the issue. At normal times, what is the use of understanding some truths? It is not to fill your belly, and it is not merely to give you something to say, nor is it to resolve the problems of others. More importantly, its use is to resolve your own problems, your own difficulties—only after you resolve your own difficulties can you resolve the difficulties of others"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Confused People Cannot Be Saved). **"You must have an understanding of the people with whom you fellowship, and you must fellowship about spiritual matters in life; only then can you supply life to others and make up for their inadequacies. You should not talk to them in a lecturing tone; that is fundamentally the wrong position to have. In fellowship, you must have an understanding of spiritual matters, you must possess wisdom, and you must be able to understand what is in people's hearts. If you are to serve others, then you must be the right kind of person, and you must fellowship with all that you have"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 13). Through God's words I understood that to resolve other people's problems, we have to practice and enter into God's words first. We have to seek the truth and resolve our own corruption. That's what's most important. It is important to have discernment over our corrupt

disposition, so when someone else reveals that kind of corruption, we will know how to help them, how to fellowship on our own experience and understanding to show them a path of practice. We will also be able to approach others correctly and see that we have the same corruption we see in others, that it's entirely the same. Then we won't think we're better than others, but we can fellowship on an equal level. That's the only way to fellowship that will benefit others. But what was I doing instead? I wasn't focusing on my own entry or reflecting on my problems in my duty. Instead, I was just working for the sake of working, as if I were free of corruption. I was preoccupied with fixing other people's problems, and when my fellowship didn't help, I scolded them condescendingly. I wasn't living out a human likeness. I was like a demon. I was disgusting and hateful to God and repugnant to other people. The reality was that those brothers and sisters wanted to do their duty well, but they didn't know how to because they didn't fully understand the principles. When there are errors or omissions in work, we should be understanding and forgiving, guiding and helping in a more positive way, so that we can seek the truth and resolve things together. We should only reprimand and warn the people who are knowingly derelict in their duties. We shouldn't use the same approach for every situation. My heart brightened after understanding this and I knew how I should do my duty from then on.

Not long after that, I heard there was a team leader of good caliber with a pure understanding of the truth, who could resolve some practical problems through fellowship on the truth, but was a little weak, retreating in the face of problems and difficulties. I was on edge again the second I heard about this, thinking she wasn't taking her duty seriously, and I had to deal with her harshly. I suddenly realized that I was blindly acting on my arrogant disposition again. I quickly prayed to God and was determined to

practice according to His words this time. I then sought out that team leader and had a heart-to-heart with her so I could understand her state and difficulties. I found relevant words from God and used my personal experiences in my fellowship. She realized that she wasn't devoted to God's commission, and she wanted to change. It was really moving for me to see my sister able to reflect on herself and become willing to change. I really came to appreciate that a church leader has to focus on fellowship on the truth to truly edify others. It's the only way to benefit people's lives.

62. Rising Up in the Face of Failure

By Fenqi, South Korea

Before I believed in God, I was educated by the Chinese Communist Party, and I thought of nothing but how to make something of myself and bring honor to my family. Later, I tested into graduate school, and then became a lawyer. I always felt that I stood head and shoulders above others. So, no matter where I went, I always tried to show off, expecting others to see everything my way and do things according to what I said. Back then, I didn't realize this was a kind of arrogant disposition. I felt I was actually a pretty great person. After I began to believe in God, through reading Almighty God's word, I finally recognized my own arrogant disposition and saw that I not only had ambitions and desires, but was also very self-important and self-righteous. At times, when I spoke or did things, I didn't discuss them with anyone else, and insisted on getting my own way. Even though I gained some understanding of myself, I felt that these weren't major problems. I remember once in God's words I read, **"To have an unchanged disposition is to be in enmity to God,"** and **"Those who are incompatible with Christ are surely opponents of God."** I considered these words, **"To have an unchanged disposition is to be in enmity to God."** So, what about people of good humanity? Or people who are obedient to God? Do their dispositions still need to change? Just what does a changed disposition mean? I thought that I was believing in Christ, and Christ is the practical God, so shouldn't believing in Christ mean obeying Christ? So, obeying Christ means to be compatible with Christ. Especially when I thought of how I had given up my career and left my family, which was me choosing to expend for God, I thought, wasn't this a sign of me believing in Christ and being compatible with Christ? But at the time, I

didn't know that I had to achieve change in my life disposition to be compatible with Christ, so I performed my duties purely out of enthusiasm. I also didn't know what life entry was, and didn't know what dispositional change was. You could say I had no life experience at all. When did I finally come to gain some genuine understanding? It was after I experienced a very harsh pruning and dealing that I reflected on myself and saw that my own nature was actually very arrogant. I did not know to seek the truth or focus on practicing God's word when things happened to me, and I had no obedience to God at all. You could say that, basically, I was not someone who was compatible with Christ. After experiencing that pruning and dealing, I finally gained a real appreciation of what God means when He says, **"To have an unchanged disposition is to be in enmity to God."**

Because I believed in God, I was persecuted by the CCP government, and so I was forced to flee abroad in 2014. After I arrived abroad, my brothers and sisters saw that I expended myself enthusiastically and was of good caliber, so they selected me as church leader, and often recommended me to participate in certain events and give media interviews. But these things became my capital. I was already arrogant, and with this capital, I became impossibly arrogant. I felt that the church couldn't function without me, and that I was doing important work. When my brothers and sisters wanted to discuss matters with me that I saw as too trifling, I didn't want to bother with it and thought they were making a fuss over nothing. If they persisted in asking me about it, I would get annoyed, thinking, "Why are you asking me about such small things? Is this worth my time? Just deal with it yourself." And if they asked further, then, my tone immediately became interrogative and critical, and I even lectured them as if I was superior. Actually, when I treated my brothers and sisters like this, even I

felt it was inappropriate. I felt it was hurting them in some way. But during that period, I was living within that arrogant disposition and had lost all humanity. Even that shred of self-reproach vanished. This was how I acted at work and in life. In everything I did in the course of my duties, I wanted to have the final say. When I discussed things with my brothers and sisters and I heard opinions or suggestions I didn't like, I immediately rebuked them without thinking and belittled their opinions as if they were worthless. I wanted everything to go exactly as I wanted. I also rarely raised problems at work with my co-workers for discussion and seeking because I thought after doing my duties for a period of time, I had gained enough experience to be able to work things out by analyzing and studying them, and that my co-workers weren't familiar with the work, so they didn't quite understand. I thought, if I spoke to them, they wouldn't be able to add anything, nor understand things better than me. I thought going through the process of discussion was simply a waste of time, that it was just going through the motions. So I gradually stopped wanting to work with them. When my leaders came to find out about my work, I also got very annoyed, and I didn't want to accept other people's supervision or promptings. At the time, I actually felt that my state wasn't right. My brothers and sisters also warned me, saying, "You're too arrogant and self-righteous, and you don't want to work with anyone. You refuse to accept others' supervision and promptings in your duties and work, and you don't want anyone interfering in your work." These warnings and this help from my co-workers actually were a kind of pruning and dealing, but I ignored them. What I felt was, even though I was arrogant, had not achieved much life entry, and had achieved no change, I was still performing my duties, so this wasn't a major problem. I didn't take the help and warnings of my brothers and sisters seriously. I didn't think much of it. I thought my arrogant disposition, or my

satanic nature, wasn't something I could change overnight. So, I thought, this is a long-term process, and that for the moment I should deal with my work and perform my duties well.

When I lived within such an arrogant disposition, it doesn't mean I felt nothing. In fact, my heart felt very empty at the time. Sometimes, after I finished a task, I would reflect and ask myself, "While I am doing it or after it is finished, what truths have I gained? Which principles have I gained entry into? Has my life disposition changed in some way?" But I never accomplished anything. Everyday I was scrambling and exhausting myself to finish my work, and whenever I had too much to do, I became full of frustration and anger. It was as if a single thing could spark me into becoming totally unable to control myself. When I prayed to God, I was simply going through the motions. I had nothing to say to God from the heart. Neither did I get any illumination or enlightenment from eating and drinking God's words. At the time I felt very empty and very anxious. The more I performed my duties, the further I was from God, and I couldn't feel God in my heart. I was afraid of being abandoned by God. So, I urgently went before God and prayed: "God! I am unable to save myself, and I can't control myself, so I ask You to save me." Not long after, sudden pruning and dealing came to me.

Once, when one of my leaders inquired about my work, he discovered a problem in how I had handled the spending of church money. He found that when I had decided how to spend this money, I hadn't discussed it with my co-workers or leaders. He said to me, "This is a matter of church expenses, why didn't you discuss it with your co-workers or leaders? Is this the kind of decision you can make on your own?" I felt there wasn't anything I could say in answer to his question. At the time, I really didn't know how to answer him. I didn't know why at all, because I'd really never

thought about it. After that, I started to think back. During that period, because I was living within my arrogant nature, I didn't have any normal sense at all, I didn't know that my duties were God's commission to me, and that I should have performed them according to principles and sought the truth. I didn't know that I should have discussed and decided things together with my co-workers and leaders. I lacked that sense because I lived within my arrogant disposition. And I wasn't even aware of it at all. I even thought this was something I understood, and that I didn't need to seek or look into it. My leader dealt with me by saying, "You are arrogant and self-righteous, and you lack any sense. These offerings were given to God by His chosen people, and they should have been spent reasonably according to principle. Now the offerings have been squandered, so we have to assign responsibility according to principle." I didn't say anything back to him, but inside, I still felt I was right. I hadn't stolen the offerings, I had spent them in the course of doing church work, so why should I bear any responsibility?

After that, my leaders came to the church to meet with us, and they fellowshiped and analyzed my problem using God's words. At the time, I also used God's words to explain my understanding of myself, but in my heart, I knew that I was using this fellowship on God's word simply to let out the defiance, dissatisfaction, and lack of understanding that had built up in my heart. I felt that I worked hard despite not receiving any recognition. My leaders saw that I had no genuine understanding of my own nature, so after seeking the agreement of my brothers and sisters, they dismissed me from my position as church leader. I didn't actually feel much regret at that moment. But after that, the leaders started going over the details of every expense, and during that process, I finally realized that there really were some problems. As the losses piled up and the amount grew, it passed

beyond what I could afford to pay, and I began to feel afraid. I began to think back on my decisions to spend that money and my dismissive, disregarding attitude, and I genuinely began to feel regret, and loathe myself. I never imagined that relying on my own satanic nature in my duties could cause such losses to the church. Faced with the facts, I couldn't help but lower my head, which I had so proudly held high, I wanted nothing more than to slap my own face. I was in disbelief that these were actually things I had done.

After that, I listened to a sermon: "Today, there are some leaders and workers who have believed in God for 10 or 20 years, but why don't they practice even a little truth, and instead do things according to their own will? Don't they realize that their notions and imaginings are not the truth? Why can't they seek the truth? They tirelessly expend themselves, performing their duties from dawn till dusk with no fear of hard work or exhaustion, yet why do they still lack principles after so many years of believing in God? They perform their duties according to their own ideas, doing whatever they want. I am sometimes shocked when I see what they do. They usually appear to be quite good. They are not evildoers, and they speak well. It's hard to imagine they are capable of such ridiculous things. In such important matters, why don't they seek or ask for advice? Why do they insist on getting their own way and having the final say in things? What is this but a satanic disposition? When I handle important things, I often speak with God, and seek and ask Him for help. Sometimes God says things that are at odds with my imaginings, but I have to obey and do things God's way. In important matters, I don't dare act on my own ideas. What would happen if I made a mistake? Best let God determine things. This basic level of reverence for God is something all leaders and workers should possess. But I've discovered that some leaders and workers are very

impertinent. They demand to have their way in all things. What is the problem here? It truly is dangerous when our dispositions haven't changed. ... Why does God's house establish decision groups? A decision group is several people who discuss, investigate, and decide a matter together to avoid any major mistakes or losses. But some people circumvent decision groups and do things their own way. Aren't they Satan the devil? Anyone who bypasses decision groups and does things their own way is Satan the devil. No matter what level of leader they are, if they bypass decision groups, do not submit plans for approval, and act on their own, then they are Satan the devil, and must be eliminated and expelled" (Sermons and Fellowship on Entry Into Life). Each word of the sermon pierced my heart. They completely laid my condition bare. Especially when I heard in the sermon that people like this are Satan the devil who must be eliminated and expelled, I felt suddenly stunned. I felt as if I had just been sentenced to death. I thought, "I'm finished. Now I will never be saved, this is the end of my life of believing in God—my belief in God is over." At the time, I was terribly afraid. I had always felt that God took very good care of me. I had a good education and job, the duties I performed in God's house were very important, and my brothers and sisters looked up to me, so I always viewed myself as someone very special to God. I thought I was the key person to be trained in God's house. I never imagined I would be loathed and eliminated by God because I had offended God's disposition. From that moment, I began to feel that God's disposition is righteous and brooks no offense, that God's house is ruled by truth and righteousness, and that it never allows anyone to engage in misconduct. In the church, we should perform our duties according to principle and seek the truth, not simply do whatever we want or act however we like. I thought that, since I had caused a disaster and carelessly spent the church's offerings, I had offended God's

disposition, and no one could save me. I had only to wait to be eliminated by God's house.

In the days that followed, each morning when I opened my eyes, I felt a moment of terror, and I became so dispirited I didn't even have the strength to get out of bed. I felt that I didn't know where I would be next, that the mistake I had made was too great, and that no one could save me. I could only go before God, pray to God, and tell Him what was in my heart. I said to God, "God, I was wrong. I never thought things would end this way. In the past I didn't know You, and I did not revere You in my heart. In Your presence I was arrogant and self-righteous, I engaged in misconduct, and was completely without sense, and so today I am undergoing this pruning, dealing, chastisement, and judgment. I see Your righteous disposition. I wish to obey and learn lessons from this situation. I beg You, God, not to leave me, because I cannot be without You." In the days that followed, I continued to pray like this. One morning, I heard a hymn of God's words: **"You must have this kind of understanding whenever something occurs: No matter what happens, it is all a part of my achieving my goal, and it is God's doing. There is weakness in me, but I will not be negative. I thank God for the love He bestows upon me and for arranging such an environment for me. I must not abandon my desire and my resolution; giving up would be tantamount to making a compromise with Satan, tantamount to self-destruction, and tantamount to betraying God. This is the kind of mindset you must have. No matter what others say or how they act, and no matter how God treats you, your determination must not waver"** (Follow the Lamb and Sing New Songs, The Resolve Necessary to Pursue the Truth). When I heard this hymn of God's words, I felt I had found a hope of saving myself. I sang it over and over, and the more I sang, the more strength I felt surging up in my heart. I

realized that I was exposed, pruned, and dealt with this way because God wanted me to know myself so that I could repent and change, not because God wanted to expel and eliminate me. But I didn't know God, I misunderstood God, and guarded myself against God, and so I lived in a negative state of total despair because I thought God didn't want me. But that day I saw God's word and realized God's will was not as I had imagined at all. God knew my spiritual stature was too immature, and He knew I would become negative and weak in these circumstances, and even give up my determination to seek the truth. And so God used His words to console and encourage me and make me realize that people always need to pursue the truth, no matter the circumstance. When we fail and fall, or when we are pruned and dealt with, these are all necessary steps in the process of being saved. As long as we can reflect and come to know ourselves, and can repent and change, then after we experience these steps, we experience growth in life. Once I understood this, I no longer misunderstood God as much, and I wasn't as guarded against God. I felt that no matter what God planned and arranged, it was surely all beneficial to me, and that God was taking responsibility for my life. So, I plucked up my courage and prepared to face whatever would happen next.

Afterward, I also calmed myself and reflected again. Why had I failed and fallen so badly? What was the root of my failure? Only after I read God's word did I finally understand. God's word says, **"If you really possess the truth within you, the path you walk will naturally be the correct path. Without the truth, it is easy to do evil, and you will do it despite yourself. For example, if arrogance and conceit existed within you, you would find it impossible to keep from defying God; you would feel compelled to defy Him. You would not do it on purpose; you would do it under the domination of your arrogant and conceited nature."**

Your arrogance and conceit would make you look down on God and see Him as being of no account; they would cause you to exalt yourself, constantly put yourself on display, and, finally, sit in God's place and bear testimony for yourself. In the end, you would turn your own ideas, your own thinking, and your own notions into truths to be worshiped. See how much evil is done by people under the dominance of their arrogant and conceited nature! To resolve their evil acts, they must first resolve the problem of their nature. Without a change in disposition, it would not be possible to bring a fundamental resolution to this problem" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only by Pursuing the

Truth Can One Achieve a Change in Disposition). In the past, I admitted my own arrogance theoretically, but I had no genuine understanding of my own nature, so I still admired myself, living within my own notions and imaginings. I felt that I was arrogant because I was qualified to be, which is why, when my brothers and sisters pruned and dealt with me and tried to help me, I ignored it. I completely disregarded it. But when I read these words of God, I finally understood that my arrogant, conceited nature was the root of my rebelliousness and resistance to God. It was a classic satanic disposition. When people live within such an arrogant, conceited nature, doing evil and resisting God become involuntary. I thought back about how I had always thought very highly of myself since I started performing the duty of a church leader. I thought I could do anything, that I was better than everyone, and I wanted to have my way in everything. Not only that, but I wanted to take over and lead the work of my whole group and make my brothers and sisters do what I wanted. I never thought about whether my thoughts and decisions were right, or whether they were biased, or whether they would cause loss to the church work until I heard the brother from the Above say in his sermon that when things happened to him, he would ask

God, because he was afraid of doing the wrong thing, and that he would only act after receiving a clear answer from God. The brother from the Above is someone who possesses the truth, who has a God-fearing heart and does things according to principle. Yet he still doesn't dare entirely trust himself. When things happen to him, he asks God and allows God to decide. A church leader, more than anyone, needs to seek truth in all things. But I didn't seek God or have a God-fearing heart at all. Whenever things happened to me, I relied on my notions and imaginings to direct me and treated my own ideas as the truth. I considered myself high and important. Isn't that a classic satanic disposition? I was just like the archangel who wanted to sit equal with God. And that was something that severely offended God's disposition! Once I finally understood these things, I felt that my arrogant, conceited nature was terrifying. It made me live without sense, made me do many things that harmed people and offended God, and it made me live like a monster. But God is righteous. How could God allow someone like me, so full of satanic dispositions, to run amok and disrupt the work of God's house? So, I deserved to be dismissed from my leadership duty, I had done this to myself. I realized that in all the years I'd believed in God, I'd relied on my gifts, and my notions and imaginings to do my work, and had rarely sought the truth. So after all that time, I now had almost no reality of the truth, and actually I was spiritually impoverished and to be pitied. I thought, why can't I seek the truth? Why do I always think my own ideas and judgments are right? This actually proved that I had no place for God in my heart at all, much less did I have a God-fearing heart. That I was exposed by God in my duty today was actually God's reminder and warning for me, and if I didn't turn around, my end would be to be eliminated and sent to hell. Once I understood these things, I felt that God's judgment, chastisement, pruning, and dealing is actually God's love and protection for

people and God's good intentions are behind it all. God judges and chastises people not because He hates them, but to save them from Satan's influence and their satanic dispositions. And once I understood this, I felt like I had fewer misunderstandings of God and was less guarded against God. I also felt that no matter what circumstances God arranged for me in the days to come, God's sovereignty and arrangements would be behind it all, and I wished to obey them.

My duties had some follow-up work I needed to complete, and I felt that this was God giving me a chance to repent, so I resolved to perform this final duty well. After that, in the course of my duties, when I discussed the work with my brothers and sisters, I no longer dared to rely on my arrogant disposition thinking myself right and making everyone else listen to me. Instead, I allowed my brothers and sisters to express their opinions and finally decided what to do by weighing up everyone's ideas. Of course, when our views differed, I could still be arrogant and self-righteous, hold to my own views, and be unwilling to accept the opinions and advice of others. But I would remember how I had failed, fallen, and been pruned and dealt with, and I would feel afraid, and then I would go before God to pray. I would consciously forsake myself, after which I sought the truth and principles with a heart that feared God along with my brothers and sisters. I felt very secure performing my duties this way, and our decisions could stand up to scrutiny. And when I was partnered with my brothers and sisters, I realized that some of my ideas were actually one-sided. Fellowshiping with my brothers and sisters, and then delving into things, at least to me, in matters of the truth, of principle, and of insight, was exceptionally helpful. Especially when I saw how when things happened to my brothers and sisters, they would pray to God, seek, and fellowship, and they didn't trust themselves lightly, I wondered why I didn't seek the truth

and so easily trusted myself. I saw that my arrogance and conceitedness made me capable of anything. I was so deeply corrupted by Satan and was no better than my brothers and sisters. It was only after that that I realized I may have had a little more knowledge than my brothers and sisters, but deep in my spirit, I couldn't even compare to them. I had less of a God-fearing heart than they did. In this, my brothers and sisters were far beyond me. And when I saw that, I realized that each of my brothers and sisters had particular strengths, which was different from how I saw my brothers and sisters in the past. I felt that my brothers and sisters were in fact better than me, and I had nothing to be arrogant about, so I began to keep my head down, and I was able to get along with my brothers and sisters and work well with them. When I was finished with the follow-up work, I waited calmly for the church's decision on how to handle me. I never expected that the leader would tell me that I could continue my duties because I was still able to carry on with things and perform my duties after being pruned and dealt with, and had gained some understanding of myself. He also pointed out some problems in the performance of my duties. When I heard him say I would be allowed to continue my duties, at that moment, there wasn't anything I could say but thanks to God. I felt that after experiencing this, after going through being exposed, after experiencing such pruning and dealing that cut straight to the bone, I finally had some understanding of my satanic nature. But the price was very high. Because I had relied on my corrupt satanic disposition in my duties, I had caused losses to the church, and according to principles, I should have been punished. But God didn't treat me according to my transgressions, but instead gave me the chance to continue my duties. I personally experienced God's incredible mercy and tolerance!

Each time I think back on this experience, I feel regret for the losses I caused to the church because of relying on my satanic nature in my duties. I also completely agree with God's words, **"To have an unchanged disposition is to be in enmity to God."** But, even more, I feel that God's chastisement, judgment, pruning, and dealing are God's greatest protection and most sincere love for corrupt mankind!

63. Who Says an Arrogant Disposition Cannot Be Changed?

By Zhao Fan, China

God's words say: **"People cannot change their own disposition; they must undergo the judgment and chastisement, and suffering and refinement, of God's words, or being dealt with, disciplined, and pruned by His words. Only then can they achieve obedience and faithfulness to God, and no longer be perfunctory toward Him. It is under the refinement of God's words that people's dispositions change. Only through the exposure, judgment, discipline, and dealing of His words will they no longer dare to act rashly but instead will become steady and composed. The most important point is that they are able to submit to God's current words, and to His work, even if it is not in line with human notions, they are able to put these notions aside and willingly submit"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. People Whose Dispositions Have Changed Are Those Who Have Entered Into the Reality of God's Words). God's words are so practical! Without their judgment and chastisement, and their pruning and dealing with us, we couldn't transform our satanic dispositions or live out a normal humanity. I used to be particularly arrogant. At work, I always felt more capable and better than others, so I thought they should all listen to me. After gaining my faith, I still frequently revealed arrogant disposition. I always wanted to have final say in everything, and condescendingly lectured and constrained others. This was stifling and harmful for my brothers and sisters. It was only through God's judging and chastising and pruning and dealing with me that I gained some understanding of my arrogant nature and was able to repent and loathe myself. Later on, I started keeping a lower profile in my interactions and

when coordinating with others to fulfill our duties. I learned to consciously seek the truth and take people's suggestions on board. Only then did I live out a bit of human likeness.

In 2015, I was chosen to serve as a church leader. At the time, I felt really happy. I thought to myself, "So many people in the church voting for me shows that I'm the best one here. I'll have to work hard to get this duty fulfilled so that the brothers and sisters see that they didn't choose the wrong person." After that, I kept myself busy every day; whenever I saw a brother or sister had some sort of problem, I'd quickly search for some relevant passages from God's words, and then fellowship with them to resolve the issue. Some time went by, and our church life had improved quite a bit. There was a lot of church work to get done, but I was able to manage every part of it neatly and tidily. When I saw that life in our church was a bit better than in other churches, I was particularly pleased. The leaders later saw that our church's work was going pretty well, they even got other churches to borrow from our playbook. What's more, the church had some important work that they wanted me to take part in. I thought, "Even the leaders think highly of me and are praising my capability; it looks like my caliber really isn't that bad—and certainly better than most!" Before I knew it, I had gotten full of myself. I just felt I could do it all and understood everything. Also, if my co-workers made any suggestions, I hardly paid them any mind; I always felt I was far superior to them, and would boss them around. When they didn't do what I wanted, I couldn't keep from criticizing and lecturing them. One time, a sister I was coordinating with was about to answer a question. After having some difficulty, she wanted to discuss it with me. I thought to myself, "What is there to discuss? This isn't a hard question; that's why I let you practice answering. If you can't even resolve such a small issue, then you're not up

to the job. If it were me, I'd have resolved it just like that." And so, I said with a haughty tone, "Don't worry yourself; I'll answer it." As a result, this sister felt stifled by me, and whenever she ran into further problems, she didn't dare come to me for help. There was another time when I recommended Sister Wang for a certain duty. Sister Chen suggested, "This duty is very important; we need a clear idea of how Sister Wang behaves ordinarily before we can be sure." I felt a bit offended by this. I thought, "I've handled this sort of task a lot in the past, and you think I don't get it? Besides, I'm in contact with her all the time, so how can you say I don't understand her? You want me to ask everyone about her, but won't that just delay things?" I said to her very sternly, "Stop wasting time. Let's just move forward." Seeing how insistent I was, Sister Chen kept quiet. I saw she was a bit constrained at the time, but I just didn't care. From then on, whenever a brother or sister made a suggestion, I always felt like they weren't good enough or mature enough, so I'd use all manner of excuses to reject their viewpoints, and then express what I considered to be some brilliant ideas, and try to get everyone to do as I said. Over time, they all became constrained by me, and while discussing work, they tended to keep quiet. Later, I would just hardly discuss things with them at all, feeling that it was just a formality and a waste of time. And so, I did my duty out of my arrogant disposition, and grew more and more rash and arbitrary.

One time, when I saw there was a team leader who wasn't successful in his duty, I thought he must be incapable of doing real work and needed to be switched out. Discussing this with my co-workers would have been reasonable, but I had second thoughts: "Actually, forget it. Even after talking it over with them, they'll just end up agreeing with me anyway." And so, I just directly replaced that team leader. After going back, I told my co-workers how I had handled things. Taken aback, Sister Chen said,

“There have been some problems with that team leader’s work, but he’s a person who pursues the truth; it’s just that he hasn’t been a believer for very long, so he has a rather superficial understanding of the truth, and there have been a few deficiencies and omissions in his duties, but this is normal. We should help him by fellowshipping more on the truth. Replacing him right now like that wouldn’t be in line with the principles.” Not really convinced, I came back with, “I only replaced him because I had spotted him as being unable to do any practical work. I’ve dealt with this sort of thing before. Are you saying I’m not perceptive?” Seeing that I wasn’t going to budge, Sister Chen didn’t say anything more. My co-workers later went to assess and understand the matter. They determined that I hadn’t dealt with it according to principle, and reinstated that team leader’s duties. The team’s work was disrupted from the duties being handed back and forth, and I felt a bit sheepish at that point. I could see I was arrogant and hadn’t acted according to principle, but I still didn’t seek out the truth or engage in self-reflection.

A month later, the church had an important job, and someone suitable would be chosen from our group of co-workers. At the time I was quite happy; feeling that in terms of caliber and work experience, I was better than the others, I figured they would vote for me. To my surprise, though, when the results were announced, I had not made the cut. I hadn’t even gotten a single vote. My heart sank with a “thud,” and suddenly I felt my world turned upside down. How could this have happened? Why hadn’t anyone voted for me? Was it that they lacked discernment? Deep down, I really wanted to know why, so I asked them to tell me what my shortcomings were. When I saw Sister Zhou wanted to say something but hesitated, I said to them, “If you’ve seen me fall short somewhere, say so; let’s all just talk openly.” Only then did she get up the courage to say, “I feel

that you're especially arrogant and self-righteous, and you won't accept other people's suggestions. Also, you are always lording it over us, and whenever I'm with you I feel a bit scared and stifled by you." Another sister hung her head and said, "I'm stifled by you, too. I feel like you're really arrogant, like you look down on everyone. It's as if you're the only one who can take on the church's work, like you can do anything, and you think no one else is remotely capable...." Sister Chen then added, "I feel you're quite conceited, and you don't seek the truth or principles in your work. You also won't accept anyone else's opinions, and you think you should get the last say in everything. You tend to decide things arbitrarily, all by yourself...." One by one, the sisters I worked with all said I was arrogant and that they'd been constrained by me. Unwilling to accept this, I thought, "You all say I am arrogant and that I constrain you; well, then why don't you admit you haven't been taking responsibility for your duty? Fine then. From now on, whatever happens, I'll keep my mouth shut. You all just do what you want." That evening, I lay in bed tossing and turning, unable to sleep. I'd always thought myself to be of good caliber and a capable worker, so being a little arrogant was normal. My sisters and brothers should think I was not bad. I'd never imagined they thought of me like that—arrogant and totally lacking reason. I'd never thought they would feel so stifled and wounded. The more I thought about it, the more upset I got. My brothers and sisters had so much distaste and loathing for me, I felt like a street rat, hated and spurned by others. There was no way God would save a person like me. I grew very negative. In my anguish, I prayed to God nonstop. I said, "God, I am in so much pain, and I don't know how to experience this. Please, enlighten me so that I can understand Your will...."

The next morning, I turned on my computer and listened to a reading of God's words: **"Having failed and fallen down multiple times is not a**

bad thing; nor is being exposed. Whether you have been dealt with, pruned, or been exposed, you must remember this at all times: Being exposed does not mean that you are being condemned. Being exposed is a good thing; it is the best opportunity for you to get to know yourself. It can bring your life experience a change of gears. Without it, you will possess neither the opportunity, the condition, nor the context to be able to reach an understanding of the truth of your corruption. If you can come to know the things inside you, all those aspects hidden deep within you that are hard to recognize and difficult to unearth, then this is a good thing. Becoming able to truly know yourself is the best opportunity for you to mend your ways and become a new person; it is the best opportunity for you to obtain new life. Once you truly know yourself, you will be able to see that when the truth becomes one's life, it is a precious thing indeed, and you will thirst for the truth and enter into the reality. This is such a great thing! If you can grab this opportunity and earnestly reflect upon yourself and gain a genuine knowledge of yourself whenever you fail or fall down, then in the midst of negativity and weakness, you will be able to stand back up. Once you have crossed this threshold, you will then be able to take a big step forward and enter truth reality” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the

Last Days. To Gain the Truth, You Must Learn From the People, Matters, and Things Around You). I was so moved as I pondered God's words, and my tears just kept pouring out. I felt that by setting up this sort of environment, in which my brothers and sisters had pruned and dealt with me so harshly, God wasn't eliminating me or deliberately embarrassing me. Instead, since I really was so arrogant and stubborn, God wanted to use this as a kind of chastening to wake me up and force me to reflect upon myself in the nick of time, to be able to repent and change. This was God saving me. Realizing this, I felt really liberated,

and I no longer misunderstood God. I prayed to Him, willing to use this opportunity to self-reflect and come to know myself.

I then looked up some of God's utterances in which He talks about man's arrogant disposition. God says, **"If you really possess the truth within you, the path you walk will naturally be the correct path. Without the truth, it is easy to do evil, and you will do it despite yourself. For example, if arrogance and conceit existed within you, you would find it impossible to keep from defying God; you would feel compelled to defy Him. You would not do it on purpose; you would do it under the domination of your arrogant and conceited nature. Your arrogance and conceit would make you look down on God and see Him as being of no account; they would cause you to exalt yourself, constantly put yourself on display, and, finally, sit in God's place and bear testimony for yourself. In the end, you would turn your own ideas, your own thinking, and your own notions into truths to be worshiped. See how much evil is done by people under the dominance of their arrogant and conceited nature!"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only by Pursuing the Truth Can One Achieve a Change in Disposition). **"Arrogance is the root of man's corrupt disposition. The more arrogant people are, the more liable they are to resist God. How serious is this problem? Not only do people with arrogant dispositions consider everyone else beneath them, but, worst of all, they are even condescending toward God. Even though, externally, some people might appear to believe in God and follow Him, they do not treat Him as God at all. They always feel that they possess the truth and think the world of themselves. This is the essence and root of the arrogant disposition, and it comes from Satan. Therefore, the problem of arrogance must be resolved. Feeling that one is better than others—that is a trivial matter. The critical issue**

is that one's arrogant disposition prevents one from submitting to God, His rule, and His arrangements; such a person always feels inclined to compete with God for power over others. This sort of person does not revere God in the slightest, to say nothing of loving God or submitting to Him" (God's Fellowship). While reading God's words, I felt extremely distressed and uncomfortable, and a bit frightened. I saw how I'd been living by my arrogant disposition, not only constraining and harming people, and being unable to interact with them properly, but first and foremost, there had been no place for God in my heart, and I had not revered Him. I was prone to doing evil and resisting Him at any moment. I thought about how, since I'd been doing my duty as a leader, I had thought I had some caliber, was capable of getting some work done, and so thought very highly of myself. When working alongside others, I always thought I was superior to them, ordering them around and constraining them. When my co-workers suggested something different, I never sought the principles of the truth. I just thought that since I had experience and a good eye for things, I could railroad people into doing what I said. It was like I'd seen my viewpoint as the truth, as the standard, so everyone else had to obey me. Even scarier was how I'd constrained others to the point that they hadn't dared to express their own views. But I'd been totally unaware, even thinking the others were on board with me. My high opinion of myself and my capabilities had made me unwittingly put myself above my sisters and brothers, to the point that I had replaced a team leader without even discussing it with my co-workers. When my sister brought this up, I had refuted it and argued. I saw that I truly had been extremely arrogant. I didn't have the slightest reverence or submission for God, nor had I considered whether it benefited the work of God's house. I had just acted unilaterally and arbitrarily in accordance with my arrogant disposition, disrupting the

work of God's house and doing so much harm to my brothers and sisters. How was that fulfilling my duty? I thought I took on responsibility in my work, but I was actually just an arrogant dictator trying to satisfy my greed for power. I was committing evil and resisting God! Later, I asked myself over and over: How had I been capable of such unbridled arrogance that I'd set foot upon a path of doing evil and resisting God? Only while reflecting upon myself did I realize that I had been dominated by satanic poisons, like "In all the universe, only I reign supreme" and "Stand out above the rest, and bring honor to your ancestors," to the point that ever since I was little, I'd always liked lording over others, and in everything I'd done, I'd tried to get others to listen to me and revolve around me, focusing on me. It was like it was the only way to show I was capable, and that was the only valuable and meaningful way to live. Now I've finally discovered that it's because I was always living by these satanic poisons that my arrogant nature had gotten out of control, and I was living without the slightest bit of humanity. Not only had I constrained and harmed people so much, but I had also disrupted the work of the church. Only then did I really know that "In all the universe, only I reign supreme" and "Stand out above the rest, and bring honor to your ancestors," those poisons of Satan, are fallacies. They are absurd and evil, and can only corrupt and harm people. I used to always think that being superior and having people orbit around me was something to revel in. Then I finally saw clearly that living by these satanic poisons was like living as a ghost. No one wanted to come near me. I irritated other people and God despised me even more. These were the bitter fruits of living by Satan's poisons! I thought about how, at first, the archangel had been extremely arrogant, and in an attempt to be on equal footing with God, it had tried to grab control over everything. In the end, it offended God's disposition, was cursed by Him, and was cast down into the midair. So

arrogantly constraining my brothers and sisters, always thinking others should listen to me, wasn't this disposition of mine one and the same as the archangel's? At that thought I finally realized how scary it was to live with an arrogant disposition. Without God setting up this kind of environment for me, I'd definitely still be fulfilling my duty based on my arrogance, and there's no telling how much evil I would have committed, ultimately offending God's disposition and being punished. After I realized this, I prayed to God: "God, I no longer wish to live by an arrogant disposition in resistance against You. I wish to seek the truth to resolve my arrogance, and genuinely repent to You."

I read a passage of God's words that say, **"An arrogant nature makes you willful. When people have this willful disposition, are they not prone to being arbitrary and rash? How, then, do you resolve your arbitrariness and rashness? When you have an idea, you tell it to others and say what you think and believe about this matter, and then, you communicate with everyone about it. First, you can shed light on your view and seek the truth; this is the first step you put into practice in order to overcome this disposition of being arbitrary and rash. The second step happens when other people voice dissenting opinions—what practice can you put in place to keep from being arbitrary and rash? You must first have an attitude of humility, set aside what you believe to be right, and let everyone have fellowship. Even if you believe your way to be correct, you should not keep insisting on it. That, first of all, is a kind of step forward; it shows an attitude of seeking the truth, of denying yourself, and of satisfying God's will. Once you have this attitude, at the same time that you do not adhere to your own opinion, you pray. As you do not know right from wrong, you allow God to reveal and tell you what the best, most suitable thing to do is. As**

everyone joins in fellowship, the Holy Spirit brings you all enlightenment” (God’s Fellowship). In God’s words I found a path of practice: No matter what situation I encounter, I have to maintain reverence and submission before God. First, I have to pray to God and seek the truth, and then put my ideas before my brothers and sisters so we can all seek and fellowship together. Even if I think I’m right, I have to consciously deny and forsake myself, listen more to my brothers’ and sisters’ opinions, and see what will be most in line with the truth and beneficial to the church’s work. In a gathering after that, I opened myself up to my brothers and sisters, revealing my corruption, and apologized for how I had harmed and constrained them. They didn’t make a fuss over it. They all opened up and fellowshiped with me, and I felt a great weight off my chest. In work discussions after that, I would actively ask the others to express their points of view; and when different suggestions came up, we’d seek and fellowship together until we reached a consensus. Gradually, my brothers and sisters stopped feeling constrained by me, and the atmosphere in our cooperation became much more harmonious.

One day, I was discussing work with a sister I’d been matched with. She said she’d written the leaders a letter about some problems within the church, telling them about the difficulties we’d had in our duties, and how we’d experienced them. At this, my arrogant disposition reared its ugly head again. I thought, “It’s enough that we talk about it in our recent gatherings. There’s no need to write a letter.” As I was about to shoot her down, I recalled how incredibly arrogant I’d been in the past. I always wanted others to listen to me in everything, so my brothers and sisters all felt constrained by me, and I wasn’t living out a human likeness at all. So I silently prayed to God, turning my back on myself, not wanting to live by my arrogant disposition anymore. I had to practice the truth. After that, I

realized how great it was that this sister took on the responsibility of communicating about work to our leaders, so I shouldn't rein her in. I should help her write that letter well. Once I realized this, my tone softened, and I was able to patiently communicate with her about the issues in our work and listen to her views more. In some places I thought she was a little off base, but I refrained from blindly making any judgments. I figured I should seek before I spoke. It was then that I discovered that some of what she had brought up were things I'd never thought of before. I felt a bit ashamed. I saw just how incredibly arrogant I'd been, always stifling the brothers and sisters so they couldn't play their own parts in their duties. In fact, all of them had strengths. If they hadn't been there working with me, I never could have fulfilled the duties by myself. After that, we drew up a summary of the issues together, and after polishing the letter, we sent it off. In performing our duties after that, whenever my arrogant nature showed itself again, I would consciously pray to God and forsake myself, discussing and fellowshiping more with others. Our cooperation went much better, and I felt especially at ease and relieved. I felt that doing my duty that way was really great. Such an arrogant person as myself changing a little really was the fruit of experiencing the judgment and chastisement of God's words.

64. Arrogance Goes Before a Fall

By Xinjie, China

Almighty God says, **“Arrogance is the root of man’s corrupt disposition. The more arrogant people are, the more liable they are to resist God. How serious is this problem? Not only do people with arrogant dispositions consider everyone else beneath them, but, worst of all, they are even condescending toward God. Even though, externally, some people might appear to believe in God and follow Him, they do not treat Him as God at all. They always feel that they possess the truth and think the world of themselves. This is the essence and root of the arrogant disposition, and it comes from Satan. Therefore, the problem of arrogance must be resolved. Feeling that one is better than others—that is a trivial matter. The critical issue is that one’s arrogant disposition prevents one from submitting to God, His rule, and His arrangements; such a person always feels inclined to compete with God for power over others. This sort of person does not revere God in the slightest, to say nothing of loving God or submitting to Him”** (God’s Fellowship). Reading these words of God reminded me of something I experienced some time ago. Back then, I was really arrogant and self-righteous. I’d been a church leader for several years, I’d done some work and had suffered a bit, and could resolve some practical issues in my duty. So I used all this to my advantage, and paid no mind to anyone else. Then I was dealt with and disciplined, and through the judgment and revelations of God’s words, I finally gained some understanding of my arrogant nature. I felt remorseful and hated myself. I started to focus on practicing the truth, and I underwent some change.

I took on a leadership position in a church in 2015. Sister Li worked with me, and she had just begun serving as a leader. The church deacons and group leaders were pretty new to the faith, so their fellowship on the truth was a little shallow. I thought, “I’ve been a believer longer than any of you, and I’ve been a leader for a while. I’m going to have to play a major role here and make everyone see the difference experience makes.” So, I would charge to the front in any matter, and whenever a brother or sister was weak or had difficulties in their duty, whenever there was a holdup in church work, in whatever problems were the thorniest, or things my partner and co-workers couldn’t resolve, I came forward to deal with all of it. The church’s work started picking up after a little while and the brothers’ and sisters’ states had turned around. They could all do their duties properly. They also liked seeking me out for fellowship on their problems, and sought my opinion. I was really pleased with myself and couldn’t help but tally up all the work I’d done, thinking: “Without me at the helm, there’s no way the church’s work would be progressing so well. If it weren’t for my fellowship, the others’ states wouldn’t have improved so much. Looks like I really do have the reality of the truth and I can do practical work.” Sister Li later had to go back home to take care of some things, so I had to take on the church’s work by myself. At first, I felt a little stressed and kept God in my heart at all times. After every gathering I took stock of how it had gone, and I rushed to offer support to anyone feeling weak or negative. After some time, I saw that everyone was gathering and doing their duty as they should, and all of the church’s work was going along smoothly. I breathed a sigh of relief and couldn’t help but feel very pleased with myself. I felt like I’d proven myself over all these years of serving as a leader. I’d seen a lot and handled a lot of problems; I had a variety of work experience and could take care of things on my own. I figured I really was a pillar of the church.

Especially in that period, when I'd been getting up early and working into the night without complaining about tiredness or difficulty, I really felt I deserved some credit. Before I knew it, I was living in a state of being very self-satisfied and whenever I read God's words judging and exposing mankind, I wasn't applying them to myself. When brothers and sisters were in a bad state, I didn't fellowship on the truth with them, but instead spurned them and would often scold them, saying, "You've been a believer this long, but you still don't pursue the truth. How can you not have changed one bit?" Sometimes after fellowshiping on something, brothers and sisters said they still didn't know what to do. Without asking why, I'd just reproach them, saying, "It's not that you don't know, it's that you don't want to put it into practice!" They all felt constrained by me and didn't dare talk to me about their problems anymore.

Sister Liu was later elected as a leader to work alongside me. I thought that she hadn't been in the faith very long and she might not understand some things even after discussions, so I'd have to have the final say for most church matters, large and small. Sometimes I'd make a decision and then send Sister Liu off to carry it out. Once, we got a letter from our leader asking us to recommend someone for a certain duty. I knew this related to the work of God's house, so it called for discussion with my partner and co-workers, but then I thought, "I've been doing my duty in the church for so long. I know all about the brothers and sisters, so it should be fine for me to make the call." So, I made the decision without discussing it with Sister Liu and then had her go set things up. Even though we served as leaders together, I was treating her like an underling. Sometimes when she didn't take care of something well, I'd get upset with her. She was living in negativity and felt like she couldn't understand anything or do her duty well. She'd gotten to that point from me stifling her, but I still didn't reflect

on myself. Instead, I felt even more that I possessed the reality of the truth and I was capable in my work, so I had to manage the church's work. I became even more imperious and arrogant. When co-workers raised different suggestions during work discussions, a lot of the time I wouldn't seek at all, but just flat out shot them down. I thought, "What do you know, anyway? Don't I know better after years as a leader?" I ended up having the final say over everything in the church's work. God later allowed some situations to arise to deal with me. I kept hitting walls in my duty: I was missing appointments with people, and appointing people who were not in line with principles. The leader pointed out the mistakes in my work, and dealt with and pruned me. Even in the face of this, I still didn't reflect on myself. I thought I just needed to pay more attention. A co-worker warned me, "Shouldn't you reflect on why these problems have cropped up?" I said disdainfully, "No one's perfect, and everyone makes mistakes. There's no need to reflect on everything." Some brothers and sisters asked me if I was doing okay, and I said I was fine, but inside I was thinking, "Why would something be wrong? Even if I were in a bad state, I could deal with it myself. No need for you to worry. I've been a leader this long, so don't I understand the truth better than you?" No matter how they cautioned me, I wouldn't listen. I was living entirely within my corrupt disposition and my spirit was growing darker. I started nodding off when I read God's words and had nothing to say in prayer. More and more problems started cropping up in the church. I was totally blind. I lacked insight into a lot of problems and didn't know how to deal with them. Before long, a general opinion survey was done in the church, and the brothers and sisters all said that I was really arrogant and wouldn't accept the truth. They said I was dictatorial, that I'd scold people and constrain them. I ended up being removed from my position. On that day, the leader shared everyone's

evaluations with me. I could feel God venting His wrath at me through the brothers and sisters exposing and dealing with me. I felt like a street rat that disgusts everyone and is even spurned by God. I couldn't understand how I'd sunk so low. In my pain, I came before God in seeking: "Oh God, I've always thought of myself as being responsible in my church work, as having some reality of the truth. I never thought I'd have as many problems as I do now. In the others' eyes, I'm an arrogant person who won't accept the truth. God, I don't know how I became this way. Please enlighten and guide me to know myself and understand Your will."

I then read these words from God: **"It would be best for you to dedicate more effort to the truth of knowing the self. Why have you not found favor with God? Why is your disposition abominable to Him? Why does your speech arouse His loathing? As soon as you have demonstrated a bit of loyalty, you sing your own praises, and you demand a reward for a small contribution; you look down upon others when you have shown a modicum of obedience, and become contemptuous of God upon accomplishing some petty task. ... Those who perform their duty and those who do not; those who lead and those who follow; those who receive God and those who do not; those who donate and those who do not; those who preach and those who receive the word, and so on: all such men praise themselves. Do you not find this laughable? Knowing full well that you believe in God, you nevertheless cannot be compatible with God. Knowing full well that you are utterly without merit, you persist in boasting all the same. Do you not feel your sense has deteriorated to the point that you no longer have self-control?"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Those Who Are Incompatible With Christ Are Surely Opponents of God). **"Do not think that you understand everything. I tell you that all you have seen and**

experienced is insufficient for you to understand even a thousandth of My management plan. So why then do you act so haughty? That little bit of talent and tiny bit of knowledge you have are insufficient for Jesus to use in even a single second of His work! How much experience do you actually possess? What you have seen and all that you have heard in your lifetime and what you have imagined are less than the work I do in a single moment! You had best not nitpick and find fault. You can be as arrogant as you want, but you are nothing more than a creature not even the equal of an ant! All that you hold within your belly is less than what is in an ant's belly! Do not think, just because you have gained some experience and seniority, that this entitles you to gesticulate wildly and talk big. Are not your experience and your seniority the product of the words I have uttered? Do you believe that they were in exchange for your own labor and toil?" (The Word, Vol. 1. The

Appearance and Work of God. The Two Incarnations Complete the Significance of the Incarnation).

What God's words revealed was precisely my state. I was gutted, and only then started reflecting on myself. After doing my duty as a leader for a few years, I thought that since I'd been in that position for a while, I understood more truth and was more capable than the others, that I was a pillar of the church, and the church couldn't do without me. When I achieved a bit in my duty, I thought I understood everything, that I had the reality of the truth, that I was better than everyone. I thought having faith for a while, having some experience was my ticket to being arrogant and that I was on a higher rung than other people. I didn't pay brothers' and sisters' suggestions any mind at all, much less seek or accept them. Even when they were caring toward me and asked about my state, I felt I was of greater stature than them, so I could take care of it, and didn't need their help. When I discovered their faults and difficulties, I didn't fellowship on the truth to

help them, but snubbed them. They just couldn't do right in my eyes and I scolded them loftily. As a result, brothers and sisters were constrained by me and lived in negativity. How was that doing my duty? It was clearly doing evil. I revealed nothing but an arrogant, conceited satanic disposition. When God became flesh in the last days, expressing the truth and working to save man, He did such great work, but He never showed off, and He didn't present Himself as God. Instead, He was humble and hidden, quietly doing the work of salvation. I saw that God is so humble and lovely, but I, so deeply corrupted by Satan and full of satanic dispositions, thought so much of myself and my abilities just because I'd had faith for a while, and I understood more doctrines, and had some work experience. I got up on my pedestal and wouldn't come down. I was totally lacking in self-knowledge, I didn't know anything about myself, and I was arrogant beyond all reason. I was hideous. After being exposed by God, I finally saw my true stature. I had been able to resolve some issues in my duty only because of the Holy Spirit's work. Without His work and guidance, I was totally blind and understood nothing. I couldn't take care of my own problems, much less other people's. Even so, I became totally overbearing. I really was so arrogant. At that point I felt ashamed of my behavior.

I then read these words of God: **“If you really possess the truth within you, the path you walk will naturally be the correct path. Without the truth, it is easy to do evil, and you will do it despite yourself. For example, if arrogance and conceit existed within you, you would find it impossible to keep from defying God; you would feel compelled to defy Him. You would not do it on purpose; you would do it under the domination of your arrogant and conceited nature. Your arrogance and conceit would make you look down on God and see Him as being of no account; they would cause you to exalt yourself,**

constantly put yourself on display, and, finally, sit in God's place and bear testimony for yourself. In the end, you would turn your own ideas, your own thinking, and your own notions into truths to be worshiped. See how much evil is done by people under the dominance of their arrogant and conceited nature! To resolve their evil acts, they must first resolve the problem of their nature. Without a change in disposition, it would not be possible to bring a fundamental resolution to this problem" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only by Pursuing the Truth Can One Achieve a Change in Disposition). After reading God's words I realized that my arrogant nature was the root of me doing evil and resisting God. Driven by my arrogant nature, I took credit for the results of the Holy Spirit's work when I had a bit of success in my duty, parading myself as the golden child of the church. I shamelessly believed myself to be a recipient of God's salvation, yet I had no self-knowledge at all. In my duty, I was constantly flaunting my seniority, thinking of myself as better and higher up than anyone, always lording over others. I even used God's words to admonish brothers and sisters, and when arranging work I didn't discuss things with the sister working with me. Instead, I acted autocratically and had the last word. I even made unilateral decisions on important matters for the work of God's house. I made that sister nothing but a figurehead and created my own empire in the church. Because of my arrogant nature, I disregarded everyone else and didn't keep God in my heart. I didn't seek the principles of the truth when faced with an issue, and I even took my own ideas as the truth, having everyone else listen to and obey me. It reminded me of God giving the archangel some power to have it manage the other angels in heaven, but it lost all reason in its arrogance, feeling it was something special and wanting to be on equal footing with God. As a result, it offended God's disposition, and God cursed it and cast it down

from heaven. And now, God elevated me to work as a leader so that I would exalt and bear witness to Him in all things, so I could fellowship on the truth to resolve practical issues, help others understand the truth and submit to God. But I didn't seek the truth or do my duty according to God's requirements. Instead I seized power, put myself at the center, and had everyone listen to and obey me. How was I any different from the archangel? God arranged situations to block my way, and then warned me through brothers and sisters, but I didn't accept that or reflect on myself at all. I was so rigid and rebellious! I'd been doing my duty with my arrogant disposition, stifling brothers and sisters, resulting in them living in negativity and unable to resolve their difficulties. There wasn't any progress in the church's work, either. That was all evil I did from being controlled by my arrogance! I have such a stubborn, arrogant nature. Without God harshly exposing and dealing with me through brothers and sisters, and removing me from my duty, I never would have reflected on myself. If that had gone on, I only would have done more evil. I would have offended God's disposition, then been cursed and punished by God, just like the archangel. At that point I gained understanding of God's kind intentions. He was doing this to stop me in my evil tracks and to give me a chance to repent. This was God protecting and saving me. I gave thanks to God from my heart.

After I was replaced, Sister Liu was able to carry out her duty normally, and from what others said, even though the newly elected leader and deacons hadn't been believers for long, when discussing work no one clung to their own ideas, but instead prayed and leaned on God, seeking the principles of the truth together. Everyone worked together, and the church's work gradually picked up again. I was really ashamed to hear this. I had always thought church work couldn't go on without me, but faced with the facts, I saw that the work of God's house is all done and supported by the

Holy Spirit, and it's not something any one person can do. People just perform their own duty. No matter how long we've believed in God, as long as we rely on God to seek and practice the truth in our duty, we'll have God's guidance and blessings. Doing my duty without seeking the truth, but arrogantly doing whatever I wanted, and being dictatorial was disgusting to God. Without God's guidance, I lost the Holy Spirit's work and became worthless. I couldn't do anything. I used to be blindly arrogant, running rampant, haughtily ordering people around, constraining and harming brothers and sisters, and I'd disrupted the work of the church. I felt so guilty, and had so much self-reproach. I prayed to God: "God, I've been so blind. I haven't known myself, always thinking that I understood more because I'd been a leader for longer, so I was better than everyone. My arrogance led me in my duty, and this disrupted the work of Your house. Oh God, I don't want to oppose You anymore, and I wish to truly repent."

I then read this in God's words: **"You must know what kind of people I desire; those who are impure are not permitted to enter into the kingdom, those who are impure are not permitted to besmirch the holy ground. Though you may have done much work, and worked for many years, in the end if you are still deplorably filthy, then it will be intolerable to the law of Heaven that you wish to enter My kingdom! From the foundation of the world until today, never have I offered easy access to My kingdom to those who curry favor with Me. This is a heavenly rule, and no one can break it! You must seek life. Today, those who will be made perfect are the same kind as Peter: They are those who seek changes in their own disposition, and who are willing to bear testimony to God and perform their duty as a creature of God. Only people such as this will be made perfect"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Success or Failure Depends on the Path That Man Walks). **"I decide the**

destination of each person not on the basis of age, seniority, amount of suffering, and least of all, the degree to which they invite pity, but according to whether they possess the truth. There is no other choice but this. You must realize that all those who do not follow the will of God shall also be punished. This is an immutable fact” (The Word, Vol. 1. The

Appearance and Work of God. Prepare Sufficient Good Deeds for Your Destination). God’s words were perfectly clear. God determines people’s outcomes not by how long they’ve believed, how much they can preach, or how much they’ve worked, but by whether they pursue the truth, whether they’ve changed their corrupt dispositions, and whether they can do the duty of a created being. These are the most important things. Before, I never knew God’s righteous disposition. I’d believed for a while, I had a few years’ experience as a leader, and I’d had some success in my duty. I used all this to my advantage. I thought if I kept on pursuing in that way, I’d be saved by God, so I didn’t focus on experiencing being judged, chastised, dealt with, and pruned by God. I particularly disregarded seeking the truth in my duty to resolve my corrupt dispositions. As a result, my life disposition hardly changed after years of faith in God, and I was still living by my satanic, arrogant nature, doing evil and resisting God. I saw that we can’t know ourselves or truly repent to God if we don’t pursue the truth in our faith. No matter how much work we’ve done, how much we’ve preached, without change in our life disposition, we’ll still be condemned and eliminated by God. This is determined by God’s righteous disposition and holy essence. After understanding God’s will I no longer took advantage of how long I’d believed or how much work I’d done, but started to focus on putting effort into God’s words, reflecting and knowing myself, and pursuing change in my satanic dispositions.

After that, I was given another duty in the church. When working with brothers and sisters, I was more humble, and when they raised different views, sometimes I felt I was right and wanted them to listen to me, but I quickly realized that I was showing my arrogant disposition again, so I would pray to God and put myself aside to seek the truth alongside brothers and sisters, and resolve things through discussion. Brothers and sisters all said I wasn't as arrogant as before, that I was much more mature. Hearing this assessment from them was really moving for me. I knew this had been achieved by the judgment and chastisement of God's words. Even though I haven't entirely gotten rid of my arrogant disposition and I'm still a far cry from the standards God requires, I've seen God's love and salvation. I've seen that God's work and words truly can transform and purify people.

65. A Human Likeness Is Attainable by Resolving Arrogance

By Zhenxin, USA

In March 2017, I started doing graphic design work for the church mainly for movie posters and thumbnails. At first, I didn't know much about the technical side, so I was constantly learning the principles and technical skills. I would modestly ask for brothers' and sisters' help and I was careful to take others' advice in my designs. After a while, I started to get a handle on the technical skills I needed for the duty. My thumbnails were put online and the click-through rate was pretty good. There was one particular poster for a documentary that lots of brothers and sisters praised. Others were consulting with me a lot on technical issues, so I felt like I had some real talent in the area of graphic design. I became arrogant without realizing it.

Later on, when I was designing thumbnails that were easier than the movie posters, I felt like I was skilled enough to get them done really quickly. So I'd do them based on the technical skills I had without putting in much thought or seeking the principles. As a result, I got feedback from brothers and sisters, saying both the lighting and color were off theme. I didn't consider their feedback or accept it, but thought, "Don't you have any taste? This is bold creativity. I've considered all this and it's not a problem. You're suggesting things out of ignorance." I really stuck to my guns and my temper even flared up. I refused to make any edits. As a result, some of my thumbnails were rejected because of issues with the images. I heard later that a sister felt really constrained by me and was afraid to give me more suggestions. I felt kind of bad when I heard this, but I didn't reflect on myself in light of what had happened.

I worked on a design for another movie poster before long. The movie was about a believer who was misled and controlled by pastors and elders and limited by religious notions, and thus wouldn't accept God's new work. She eventually accepted Almighty God's work of the last days after seeking the truth and came to live in God's light. I considered this theme and thought, "The poster should definitely fade from darkness to light—there's no better idea." I spent a long time looking for a similar movie poster to use as a reference. When I looked at my final image, I thought it was really good, that it looked like a poster for a blockbuster film. I was really patting myself on the back. Then a sister saw my poster and gave me this suggestion: "It's too dark over here. There's no detail and it's too dull." Another sister had this suggestion: "It's too dark overall, it's not clear. It looks kind of gloomy. This movie bears witness to God, so the image shouldn't be too dark." I felt really resistant to what they had to say. I thought, "I think this looks great. You don't know how to manage shading, but you're telling me how to do it. Aren't you just nitpicking?" What I said was, "Isn't this the right shading? There has to be the distinction of light and dark. Besides, it's for a movie poster, so the point is to work on the shading. That's the way other movie posters are done. There's nothing wrong with it." Then I sent them a copy of the movie poster I'd referred to. To my surprise, they said there was too much dark space in my poster and it didn't look as nice as the other one. I was really annoyed when they said that, and thought, "Don't you forget that you're always asking me for advice on shading. You don't even have a basic handle on this, but you're telling me how to do it. Aren't you trying to teach fish how to swim?" To prove I was right, I sent the image I'd designed to other brothers and sisters, but they also told me it was too dark. I just had to bite the bullet and change it. I still thought I had the right idea and that it accorded with the principles

of shading, so I just made small changes, but it still wasn't accepted. As a result, I was working on an image that should have taken a week for almost a month. It was ultimately tossed because of designing issues. That was like a slap in the face for me. I felt really dispirited and deflated and I didn't want to open up in fellowship with the others. I was in a dark, painful place. Then the team leader reminded me that none of my recent designs had been successful and that I needed to reflect on myself before God right away. Only then did I come before God in reflection and I found some relevant words of God.

I read this in my devotionals one day: **“When issues befall you, you must not be self-righteous, thinking, ‘I understand the principles, and I have the final say. You aren’t qualified to speak. What do you know? You don’t understand; I do!’ This is being self-righteous. Being self-righteous is a corrupt, satanic disposition; it is not something within normal humanity” “If you are always self-righteous and insist on your own ways, saying, ‘I won’t listen to anybody. Even if I do, it will be for appearances’ sake—I won’t change. I’ll do things my way; I feel I’m right and completely justified,’ what will happen? You may be justified and there may be no fault in what you do; you may not have made any mistakes, and you may have a better understanding of a technical aspect of an issue than others, yet, once you behave and practice in this way, others will see, and they will say: ‘This person’s disposition is no good! When issues befall them, they accept nothing anyone else has to say, right or wrong. It’s all resistance. This person does not accept the truth.’ And if people say you do not accept the truth, what must God think? Is God able to see these expressions of yours? God can see them all too clearly. God not only searches the innermost heart of man, but also watches everything you say and do at all times, in all places. And,**

when He sees these things, what does He do? He says: ‘You are hardened. You are thus in cases where you are in the right, and you are also thus in cases where you are in the wrong. In all cases, all your revelations and expressions are contrary and oppositional. You accept nothing of the ideas or suggestions of others. All within your heart is contradiction, confinement, and refusal. You are very difficult!’” (The

Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. If You Cannot Always Live Before God, You Are a Nonbeliever). God really does see into our hearts and minds. This totally exposed my state. I had been revealing the satanic disposition of arrogance. When my posters were approved and praised by brothers and sisters, I thought that was because of my own skill and that no one else could match my design and technical knowledge. When other people gave me suggestions, I refused to accept them, figuring they didn’t understand. Even when multiple people made the same suggestion, I was really rigid. I pretended to accept what they said, but really I clung to my own thinking. I only changed what suited me and refused to change what I disagreed with. I found all sorts of excuses to argue with people and even lost my temper. I ended up stifling a sister that way. I realized I was arrogant beyond all sense. I was totally unreasonable! I was so arrogant and self-righteous that I didn’t want to accept anyone else’s suggestions. Not only did my image have to be edited over and over, holding up our work, but my own state just kept deteriorating. Without facing those failures and setbacks, I never would have come before God to reflect and know myself. If I didn’t turn back, but kept living by my arrogant disposition, the others would reject me and God would be disgusted. I was filled with regret and felt a little afraid at that thought. I immediately came before God in prayer, willing to repent.

Afterward, I opened up to the sisters in the team about the corruption I’d revealed and told them I was willing to accept suggestions and being

dealt with. In my duty from then on, brothers and sisters gave me a number of suggestions and at first it was quite hard for me to accept them. But when I remembered my recent failures, I would pray and set myself aside. I thought about why they'd make that suggestion, what could be achieved by following it, and where the problem lied. Then I'd consider it based on principle. With that approach it was easier to understand and accept others' suggestions and my edits were much better received. I also saw how wonderful practicing the truth is. But my arrogant disposition was really entrenched in me, so I couldn't uproot it with just one experience of failure.

I sunk back into arrogance a little while later. There was one time I designed a thumbnail for church hymns. I thought that since they are brothers and sisters expressing praise for God after experiencing His work, it should have a warm, romantic, beautiful feeling. I thought about some color theory I'd learned that said purple embodied that feeling, and had a dignified and elegant meaning. I felt I couldn't go wrong by using purple as the primary color. When I was done, some brothers and sisters said they liked my thinking on that and the color was pretty. I was very pleased with myself and thought I did have some caliber and design capability after all. I was surprised when a sister who'd just started in design sent me a suggestion, saying "Church hymns are real experiences and understanding from brothers and sisters. The use of the color purple is too dreamlike and doesn't fit with the hymns' mood. It's a little hard on the eyes. I'd suggest changing it." I read her suggestion but felt some real internal resistance. I thought, "I've been through so many training materials that say purple has a nice warming feeling. Besides, there are lots of other designs online that use purple this way. Why would you say that it's hard on the eyes? On top of that, you've just gotten your feet wet and have hardly designed anything yourself, but you're giving me suggestions. You don't know your own

limits.” But I still didn’t feel comfortable refuting her outright, so I put her off, saying I’d canvass other brothers’ and sisters’ suggestions. I never did go ask for anyone else’s opinion, but just brushed it off.

A few days later, another sister gave me the same feedback and said the color I’d used was depressing. She suggested I change it. The team leader reminded me not to be stubborn and that I should make changes for further review. I didn’t dare stick to my guns at that point, so I tried to make some changes. But I wasn’t really willing to let go of that purple design. I thought, “My design with this color can’t really be that bad. Some of the others like it, so why do I have to change it?” So I struggled to change it when I thought about it that way. It still didn’t look good after a few attempts. Then a flaw cropped up in the image in one edit, which I spent hours on but couldn’t find a way to fix. I was incredibly frustrated and at my wits’ end and even wanted to give up. I thought of how I’d spent a month on that one image editing it six times, and the others had given me so many suggestions. I still hadn’t finished it and it was holding up our work. I was really upset. I remembered how I’d hindered our work before because I was arrogant and couldn’t take feedback. Now I was being arrogant again and rejecting others’ suggestions. Wasn’t that the same old problem? I quickly came before God in prayer, “Oh God, my arrogant disposition is really serious. I can’t submit in this situation. Please enlighten and guide me so that I can understand Your will, truly know myself and come out from this state.”

I later read this passage of God’s words: **“Arrogance is the root of man’s corrupt disposition. The more arrogant people are, the more liable they are to resist God. How serious is this problem? Not only do people with arrogant dispositions consider everyone else beneath them, but, worst of all, they are even condescending toward God. Even**

though, externally, some people might appear to believe in God and follow Him, they do not treat Him as God at all. They always feel that they possess the truth and think the world of themselves. This is the essence and root of the arrogant disposition, and it comes from Satan. Therefore, the problem of arrogance must be resolved. Feeling that one is better than others—that is a trivial matter. The critical issue is that one's arrogant disposition prevents one from submitting to God, His rule, and His arrangements; such a person always feels inclined to compete with God for power over others. This sort of person does not revere God in the slightest, to say nothing of loving God or submitting to Him. People who are arrogant and conceited, especially those who are so arrogant as to have lost their sense, cannot submit to God in their belief in Him, and even exalt and bear testimony for themselves. Such people resist God the most. If people wish to get to where they revere God, then they must first resolve their arrogant dispositions. The more thoroughly you resolve your arrogant disposition, the more reverence you will have for God, and only then can you submit to Him and be able to obtain the truth and know Him” (God’s Fellowship). This helped me understand that arrogance is the root of resisting God. Controlled by my arrogant disposition, I thought I was always right, as if my perspectives were the truth, as if they were authoritative. I didn’t have any desire to seek the truth and submit to God. I just wouldn’t take in anyone’s suggestions. Especially when someone who wasn’t as skilled technically or didn’t understand a certain technical aspect gave me their suggestions, I was really resistant. I acted like I accepted them, but in reality I didn’t take their suggestions seriously. God reminded me multiple times through others to put my will aside, to focus on what benefits God’s house, to seek, to try, and to create the best version. But I was incredibly stubborn and conceited. I

took my own ideas and experience as the truth and I dug my heels in when others' suggestions didn't pass muster with me. This disrupted the work of God's house. Then I finally began to understand these words of God: **"Not only do people with arrogant dispositions consider everyone else beneath them, but, worst of all, they are even condescending toward God."** **"The more arrogant people are, the more liable they are to resist God."** I became totally convinced of them. I also felt a little afraid. It reminded me of the antichrists in the church. They were really arrogant and dictatorial, and never listened to others' suggestions. They even lashed out at and excluded people who gave feedback and that really disrupted the work of God's house and offended God's disposition. They were all weeded out by God. I hadn't done the kind of evil that the antichrists had, but how was the disposition I revealed any different from theirs? It was then that I realized how serious the consequences would be if my arrogance wasn't resolved. I came before God in prayer right away, willing to repent.

Afterward, I read this passage of God's words: **"Looking at it now, is it difficult to fulfill one's duty adequately? In fact, it is not; people must only be able to take a stance of humility, possess a bit of sense, and adopt an appropriate position. No matter how educated you think you are, what awards you have won, or how much you have achieved, and no matter how high you believe your caliber and rank might be, you must start by letting go of all of these things—they count for nothing. In God's house, however great and good those things are, they cannot be higher than the truth; they are not the truth, and cannot take its place. This is why I say you must have this thing called sense. If you say, 'I am very gifted, I have a very sharp mind, I have quick reflexes, I am a quick learner, and I have an exceedingly good memory,' and you always use these things as capital, then this will cause trouble. If you**

see these things as the truth, or as higher than the truth, then it will be hard for you to accept the truth and put it into practice. Haughty, arrogant people who always act superior have the hardest time accepting the truth and are most prone to falling. If one can resolve the issue of one's arrogance, then it becomes easy to put the truth into practice. Thus, you must first put down and deny those things that seem on their surface to be nice and lofty and that provoke the envy of others. Those things are not the truth; rather, they can block you from entering the truth" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. What Is the Adequate Performance of Duty?). Then I understood that I had to put myself aside and deny myself to resolve my arrogant disposition. Human skills, abilities, experience, and gifts aren't the truth, no matter how amazing they are. They're just tools to help us do our duty. We shouldn't try to capitalize on them. Seeking the truth, doing things by principle, working well with others, and learning from others are all key. That's the only way to do our duty well. Then I looked through some of the better posters I'd designed and found that there had been obvious problems with the concept, shading, coloring, and composition in my original images. But after editing them based on brothers' and sisters' feedback, they were improved a lot and some had undergone a total transformation. I was embarrassed to see this. I thought that I'd had some success in my work and I'd received some praise from others because I had better technical skills and more experience than them. I capitalized on this, refusing to listen to anyone. But the reality was my designs had only succeeded because I'd gone by the principles of the truth and accepted others' suggestions. They were made with God's guidance and enlightenment and through working in harmony with brothers and sisters. When I just relied on my technical skills without seeking the principles of the truth or taking others' feedback, my images were no good,

and this really hindered the church's work. I was so ashamed when I thought back on how I'd been so arrogant and self-righteous in my approach. I clearly wasn't anything special. I'd just grasped the tip of the iceberg in design and I was a far cry from a true professional. But I was still so self-assured and arrogant. I'd been so brash. At this realization, I said a prayer and let go of my views. I followed the others' feedback, and really thought about how to make edits for better results. Not only was the problem resolved but I also found a better color. I got the image edited really quickly and brothers and sisters said it looked a lot nicer after those changes. I felt so ashamed to see this. We'd gone through multiple revisions of that image entirely because of my own arrogance, wasting so much precious time and inconveniencing the others. It seriously disrupted the work of God's house. Not only did my skills stagnate, but my life entry suffered a setback. I saw that living by my arrogant disposition did nothing but harm. I had so much regret and I silently resolved: "No matter what feedback I get in the future, I'll learn to put myself aside, seek the truth, and put the interests of God's house first. I can't keep living in arrogance."

Recently I designed a thumbnail for a video of the reading of God's words and when I showed my first draft to the brothers and sisters that read God's words, they said the globe image was too big and seemed crammed into the center, so the field of view wasn't open enough. They sent me some images for reference to help me make improvements. I was thinking, "The globe has to be that big to have the proper effect and you don't have professional graphic design experience or any practical training. I'm more skilled in this area. There's nothing for me to gain from your feedback." So I just haphazardly scanned through their feedback and wanted to edit the image based on my own thinking. I realized I was showing my arrogance again, that I hadn't calmly considered the feedback or the ultimate outcome.

I was making blind judgments and that was at odds with God's will. I said a prayer right away asking God to quiet my heart so I could practice the truth and forsake my flesh. I read this passage of God's words after that: **"You must first have an attitude of humility, set aside what you believe to be right, and let everyone have fellowship. Even if you believe your way to be correct, you should not keep insisting on it. That, first of all, is a kind of step forward; it shows an attitude of seeking the truth, of denying yourself, and of satisfying God's will. Once you have this attitude, at the same time that you do not adhere to your own opinion, you pray. As you do not know right from wrong, you allow God to reveal and tell you what the best, most suitable thing to do is. As everyone joins in fellowship, the Holy Spirit brings you all enlightenment. God enlightens people according to a process, which sometimes simply takes stock of your attitude. If your attitude is one of rigid self-assertion, God will hide His face from you and close Himself off to you; He will expose you and ensure you hit a wall. If, on the other hand, your attitude is correct, neither insistent on your own way, nor self-righteous, nor arbitrary and rash, but an attitude of seeking and acceptance of the truth, then, when you fellowship with the group, and the Holy Spirit sets to work among you, perhaps He will lead you to understanding by means of someone's words"** (God's Fellowship). Then I understood that when I encountered different ideas from others in my duty, that was something God allowed. God watches our every thought and deed, so I should be practicing the truth and accepting God's scrutiny. I couldn't just take things at face value and judge other people's professionalism. Even if I was more knowledgeable, no matter how reasonable I thought my idea was, I should come off my high horse, set aside my own imaginings, seek the principles of the truth, and do whatever would be most effective.

Even if I turned out to be right in the end, at least I would have sought and practiced the truth. That is invaluable. God detested my satanic dispositions that are in enmity with Him, so displaying my arrogance was worse than making a mistake. I thought about how my arrogance had really disrupted the work of God's house and really felt that I couldn't be so headstrong anymore. I had to approach suggestions for revisions calmly and strive to make the image better. After that, I took others' suggestions seriously and found one of the reference images was really stylish and I could learn from it. I discussed it with other team members and everyone agreed edits should be made as suggested. I reworked the layout and some other aspects and it was done before I knew it. I felt this had all been achieved through God's enlightenment and guidance. Though I received a few more suggestions, I handled it appropriately and didn't feel so resistant. I was happy to change it as many times as necessary to bear witness to God. After a few rounds of revisions, everyone said it was great and they didn't have any more suggestions. I saw how wonderful it was to perform my duty that way.

After being disciplined and exposed, and by reading God's words, I finally understood and hated my arrogant satanic disposition and I saw how key it is to seek and accept the truth in everything. I'm not as arrogant as I used to be and I can take suggestions from others. I've changed this way entirely because of God's judgment, chastisement, and discipline.

66. How I Changed My Arrogant Self

By Jingwei, USA

Almighty God says, “Every step of God’s work—whether it be harsh words, or judgment, or chastisement—makes man perfect, and is absolutely appropriate. Never throughout the ages has God done work such as this; today, He works within you so that you appreciate His wisdom. Although you have suffered some pain within you, your hearts feel steadfast and at peace; it is your blessing to be able to enjoy this stage of the work of God. Regardless of what you are able to gain in the future, all that you see of God’s work in you today is love. If man does not experience God’s judgment and refinement, his actions and fervor will always remain at surface level, and his disposition will always remain unchanged. Does this count as having been gained by God? Today, although there is still much within man that is arrogant and conceited, man’s disposition is much more stable than before. God’s dealing with you is done in order to save you, and although you may feel some pain at the time, the day will come when there occurs a change in your disposition. At that time, you will look back and see how wise the work of God is, and at that time you will be able to truly understand God’s will” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Only by Experiencing Painful Trials Can You Know the Loveliness of God). I used to think that just enthusiasm and willingness to pay a price in my duty could gain God’s approval. I didn’t focus on accepting His words’ judgment and chastisement or pursuing dispositional change. I just did my duty being arrogant and dictatorial. I constrained and harmed brothers and sisters, and damaged the church’s work. I eventually saw that without God’s judgment and chastisement, my corrupt disposition couldn’t be cleansed and changed and

I could never do my duty well to satisfy God. I've truly experienced that God's judgment and chastisement are our salvation.

In 2016 I was given the duty of a set designer. I was thrilled, thinking, "I studied interior design and have over four years of experience in the field. I'll have to make full use of my professional skills to do this well and satisfy God." After that, I learned skills with brothers and sisters and we fellowshiped on principles. I started to see some results in my duty after a while. When I heard someone say, "You guys did a nice job on this set. It's really realistic," though I replied saying it was God's guidance, what I thought was, "Well of course, don't you know who designed it? I'm a professional!" I started walking with my head held high and I spoke more loudly. When I saw some mistakes in other team members' duties, I looked down on them. I stopped discussing set arrangements with them. I figured since I'd studied design, there was no need, that it was a waste of time since they'd go with my ideas anyway. I'd work on the design on my own and then go discuss it with the director.

After I was promoted to team leader, I became even more dismissive of brothers and sisters. Once when we were setting up a restaurant scene, Brother Zhang on the team said, "The front door isn't tall enough, it doesn't look good." I wasn't having any of it. I thought, "I've designed so many restaurant sets. You really think I don't know how tall the door should be? You haven't done many sets, studied design, or had much practical experience, but you want to teach fish how to swim." I impatiently shot down his suggestion and had everyone keep it the way I wanted it. When the cameraman saw it, he said the door was too low and would block the shot. He couldn't film it that way. We had no choice but to make a new door. Later on, we needed to make a cupboard, so I told Brother Chen to make one according to a drawing I'd made. He said, "The center part is too

wide. It doesn't look good. How about making it a little narrower?" I thought, "I looked at all sorts of materials online and these are the right proportions. Do what I say and you can't go wrong." Sticking to my guns, I said, "What are you talking about? Just make it like I drew it!" In the end, everyone said that the center part was too wide and didn't look good. Brother Chen had to spend more time to modify it, which held up filming progress. I still didn't reflect or try to know myself, but thought nothing of it. I thought, "Who doesn't make a mistake sometimes? Just a little time and materials to fix it isn't a big deal."

After a gathering one time, Brother Zhang had this feedback for me: "I've noticed you've been pretty strong-willed when working with others lately. You haven't been listening to our suggestions, and you shoot down some that are totally viable. You speak condescendingly and stifle people, always insisting we do things your way. These are all expressions of an arrogant disposition." I verbally accepted this but was thinking, "I am arrogant, but it's not a big problem." A few days later, Brother Liu also dealt with me for being arrogant, saying I wouldn't listen to others and stifled them. My barriers went up even before he could finish. I thought, "None of you hold a candle to me. How dare you deal with me?" The more I thought about it, the less I could accept it. I was even making excuses in my prayers to God. The more I did that, the darker and more depressed my spirit became. I didn't have much direction in my set designs, but I still didn't reflect on myself. One day I knocked my leg against a metal chair frame, opening up a really long gash. I got seven stitches in the hospital. I was well aware this was no accident, but that God's will was definitely behind it. I finally quieted my heart and really reflected. Whenever brothers and sisters had suggestions or helpful pointers, I was unconvinced and resistant. I wasn't accepting or submissive at all. I was incredibly rigid. At

this thought, I prayed to God, asking Him to guide me to know my own corrupt disposition.

I read these words of God in my morning devotionals: **“If you regard others as less than you, you are self-righteous, conceited, and of benefit to no one”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 22). **“Do not think that you are a natural-born prodigy, only slightly lower than the heavens but infinitely higher than the earth. You are far from being smarter than anyone else—and, it could even be said that it is simply adorable how much sillier you are than any of the people on earth who are possessed of reason, for you think too highly of yourself, and have never had a sense of inferiority, as if you can see through My actions down to the tiniest detail. In point of fact, you are someone who is fundamentally lacking in reason, because you have no idea of what I intend to do, and you are even less aware of what I am doing now. And so I say that you are not even the equal of an old farmer toiling on the land, a farmer who has not the faintest perception of human life and yet puts all his reliance on the blessings of Heaven as he cultivates the land. You do not spare a second’s thought to your life, you know nothing of renown, and still less do you have any self-knowledge. You are so ‘above it all’!”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Those Who Do Not Learn and Remain Ignorant: Are They Not Beasts?). I felt gutted after reading this. I felt like I was being exposed with every word. Ever since I’d become a set designer, I thought I was an indispensable talent since I knew the industry and had experience. I was haughty with brothers and sisters, thinking I was the professional, so no one else was worth my time. I always had the final say and didn’t want to discuss work with others. I thought it was a waste of time since they didn’t have any design knowledge. When I did reluctantly discuss something, I thought I was the

more informed one so I could see things more comprehensively. I never explored anything they suggested, but just rebuffed them. I didn't have even the most basic respect for others. When brothers and sisters said I was arrogant and encouraged me to reflect, I couldn't accept that either, but remained resistant. I saw that I revealed nothing but arrogance. Living by my arrogant disposition, I just looked down on others and did nothing but stifle and hurt brothers and sisters. I was arrogant and autocratic in my work, forcing others to listen to me, causing them to redo things time and again and disrupting the church's work. I really was doing evil! Realizing all of this, I felt a little afraid. I prayed and repented to God. I didn't want to do things out of arrogance anymore.

In my duty after that, I consciously put myself aside and listened to other people's suggestions more to make up for my shortcomings. Sometimes I'd draw up a design and brothers and sisters would have lots of suggestions that were different from my ideas. I'd be about to dismiss them, then I'd realize I was being arrogant again. I prayed to God in my heart, asking Him to guide me to forsake myself and no longer live by my corrupt disposition. I wanted to go by whoever's suggestion that would most benefit the work of God's house. Once I started accepting others' ideas, I found that our props worked better, they were more functional, practical, and could be made faster. I got a taste of the sweetness of practicing God's words. But I didn't truly understand my arrogant nature and I lacked self-awareness. A few months later, I saw our sets were well-received by everyone and I'd had some success in my duty. Before I knew it, my arrogant disposition was cropping up again.

Once when we were putting together a set of a rich person's house, I thought, "Someone like that would have high-class stuff to reflect their status." I had brothers and sisters arrange the set just the way I wanted.

Brother Zhang pointed out that it was too modern and didn't fit with the main character's generation. I wasn't too pleased to hear that. I thought, "What do you know? This is called being flexible. We have to design it according to his status without limiting it to a certain time period. As I see it, you just have no idea what kind of style these homes should have. Your ideas are so old hat." What I said to him was, "I've got a sense of the time period. Just trust me on this." It wasn't long before Brother Chen also said the windows were too modern. I was so irritated, wondering why they were so backward and inflexible. I held my temper back and insisted on my perspective. Brother Chen didn't say anything more. When the set was finished, I was surprised when the director said that our design wasn't realistic, that it was too flashy and wasn't well-suited for the main character's generation. We had to redo it. I still wasn't having it, though. I felt they just couldn't appreciate it. But since everyone said it wasn't working, I reluctantly agreed to redo the set.

At some point later we needed an 80s-style kang bed-stove for a set. I was thinking we'd need to budget a lot for it, but Brother Zhang said we could save a lot of money if we made it ourselves and he had a detailed plan in mind. But I had nothing but disdain for that idea. We could do it ourselves for less cost, but it wouldn't be as durable. Wouldn't it just be a waste of effort? I also told the director that Brother Zhang's idea simply wouldn't work. The director said my budget was too high, so he did away with the scene with the kang. Brother Zhang later voiced another suggestion and I lectured him, thinking he didn't understand and was being obstinate. Another sister saw that he was being constrained by me and said I was arrogant. I refused to accept it. Even when discussing set arrangements with the director, I remained arrogant and unyielding. As a result, sometimes the

sets weren't what we needed and even had to be redone. This held up filming.

I was removed from that duty before long. The leader told me, "Brothers and sisters have said that you're arrogant, you do things your own way and always have the final say. You lecture people condescendingly. You act like you're the boss and they're your underlings. Everyone feels stifled by you." I was stunned when I heard this. I'd never imagined that I seemed so arrogant and unreasonable to the others. I was so upset that I didn't hear anything else the leader said. I was miserable for a few days. I couldn't eat or get decent sleep. A line of God's words came to mind during my reflection: **"Every one of you should examine anew how you have believed in God throughout your lives"** (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. Preface). I pondered this, thinking, "I've believed in God for five years now, but I've never really reflected on or known myself. I've revealed so much arrogance without realizing it. I have to really and truly reflect on myself." I said this prayer to God: "Oh God, please guide and enlighten me so that I may know my corrupt disposition, and be able to hate and forsake myself. I'm willing to repent." One day I went to the filming location for an errand where I saw an 80s-style kang that had been made as Brother Zhang suggested. It had cost less than half of my initial budget. Brother Zhang and the others had also made lots of props out of cardboard. They'd turned out well, saved time and energy, and used fewer materials. I was ashamed to see this. I saw how arrogant I'd been and how seriously I'd delayed our filming work. I started to ask myself, "Why was I so arrogant, always making others listen to me? What's the real root of this?"

In my devotionals one morning, I read this in God's words: **"If you really possess the truth within you, the path you walk will naturally be the correct path. Without the truth, it is easy to do evil, and you will do**

it despite yourself. For example, if arrogance and conceit existed within you, you would find it impossible to keep from defying God; you would feel compelled to defy Him. You would not do it on purpose; you would do it under the domination of your arrogant and conceited nature. Your arrogance and conceit would make you look down on God and see Him as being of no account; they would cause you to exalt yourself, constantly put yourself on display, and, finally, sit in God's place and bear testimony for yourself. In the end, you would turn your own ideas, your own thinking, and your own notions into truths to be worshiped. See how much evil is done by people under the dominance of their arrogant and conceited nature!" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only by Pursuing the Truth Can One Achieve a Change in Disposition). I felt terrible when I read this. I had known about my arrogant disposition but knew nothing about the consequences of arrogance. I finally saw from what God's words revealed and by reflecting on my words and deeds that it pushes me to do evil and resist God. My arrogant nature drove me to think so much of myself, so I thought nothing of the others because I had a bit of skill. I thought my take on things was always right and nobody was my equal, that they had to do as I said. If I said "left," no one could go right, and no one could suggest otherwise. I scolded anyone who didn't listen to me, and I was willful and dictatorial. I was being controlling and taking the path of an antichrist. These words from God, **"Your arrogance and conceit would make you look down on God and see Him as being of no account,"** particularly made me think about how I'd shown off in my duty. I never sought God's will or the principles of the truth. When others had a suggestion, I never considered whether it came from God, if it was God's guidance. If it wasn't my idea then I just didn't listen to it. I saw I didn't have any reverence for God at all. I was so arrogant that I treated others

with contempt and had no place for God in my heart. In faith, I should submit to the truth and the Holy Spirit's work. Whatever suggestion a brother or sister has, whether it fits with my own idea or not, it's possible it came from the Holy Spirit. I should accept it and explore it with a God-fearing heart of submission. If it accords with the truth and would benefit the work of God's house, I should obey and implement it. If I reject something from the Holy Spirit's enlightenment and guidance, that's hindering the Spirit's work and resisting God. That offends God's disposition. I did my duty out of arrogance and I was autocratic, stifling brothers and sisters and shelving perfectly good ideas. This disrupted the work of the church. Being dismissed was God's righteous disposition coming upon me. Thinking about all the harm I'd done to brothers and sisters and the losses I'd caused to the church's work, I felt so regretful and guilty. I really hated my corruption. At the same time, I was full of gratitude to God, because if I hadn't been harshly judged and chastised because of my arrogance and stubbornness, I never would have known myself. I would have kept resisting God.

I later read another passage of God's words: **"Much of the time, the thoughts, actions, and mentality of people who are talented and gifted are at odds with the truth, but they themselves are unaware of this. They still think, 'See how clever I am; I've made such smart choices! Such wise decisions! None of you can match me.' They forever live in a state of narcissism and self-appreciation. It is hard for them to quiet their hearts and contemplate what God asks of them, what the truth is, and what the truth principles are. It is hard for them to enter into the truth and the words of God, and it is hard for them to find or grasp the principles of putting the truth into practice, and to enter into the truth reality"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Exactly What People Have

Been Relying on to Live). God's words showed me that if we rely on our gifts and strengths in life, we'll become more arrogant and self-satisfied and think those things are the truth without seeking the principles of the truth. I'd thought I had some skill, so brothers and sisters couldn't do without me for set designs and props, but in fact, some of them did their duties really well without any professional experience, even making props much better than I could. I thought I was insightful, skilled, and had good ideas, but I made a mess of things. The things I made weren't useful and often had to be redone, wasting time, energy, and money. I saw that by relying on my gifts and strengths without seeking the principles of the truth, I lacked the Holy Spirit's work, so I couldn't do my duty well. If someone's heart is in the right place, God will enlighten and guide them. God bestows wisdom no human could imagine. I realized that those gifts and skills I'd been so proud of were worthless. Taking those things as my capital was really arrogant and unreasonable. I felt so ashamed thinking about it. I then said this prayer to God: "I don't want to live by my arrogant disposition anymore. I wish to firmly pursue and practice the truth, and do my duty well."

I later took on the duty of watering new believers and kept a lower profile when working with others. I consciously sought God's will whenever something came up and listened more to others' suggestions. One day a brother on the team said to me, "Your style of watering and supporting brothers and sisters is a little rigid. It's not that effective. It would be better if you could focus your watering on people's individual weaknesses." I wasn't very convinced. I felt I was bringing all my experience to bear, so how could I be doing anything wrong? I was just about to shoot him down when I realized my arrogance had reared its head again. I said a silent prayer to God, then this passage of His words came to mind: **"When other people voice dissenting opinions—what practice can**

you put in place to keep from being arbitrary and rash? You must first have an attitude of humility, set aside what you believe to be right, and let everyone have fellowship. Even if you believe your way to be correct, you should not keep insisting on it. That, first of all, is a kind of step forward; it shows an attitude of seeking the truth, of denying yourself, and of satisfying God's will. Once you have this attitude, at the same time that you do not adhere to your own opinion, you pray. As you do not know right from wrong, you allow God to reveal and tell you what the best, most suitable thing to do is. As everyone joins in fellowship, the Holy Spirit brings you all enlightenment" (God's Fellowship).

I'd been too arrogant and stubborn in the past, stifling others and disrupting the work of God's house. I knew I couldn't keep on that way, stifling people, resisting God, but had to listen to other people's suggestions. I should accept it and submit first, then seek God's will. That's the only way to receive God's guidance. So, I patiently heard this brother out and realized there really was room for improvement in my methods. The approach he suggested was more flexible and adaptable. I put it into practice and discovered it really was effective. When brothers and sisters gave me pointers after that, I wasn't resistant anymore, but accepted them and explored them, and discussed things with others to find a better path of practice. Everyone later said they gained a lot from that kind of watering. I felt a real sense of peace. I knew this was God's guidance, and could only offer up my thanks and praise to Him. I also experienced God's blessings that come from practicing principles of the truth instead of doing my duty arrogantly.

67. Living Out a Bit of Human Likeness Sure Is Great

By Tashi, Canada

Almighty God says, “Until His 6,000-year management plan comes to a close—before He reveals the outcome of each category of man—God’s work on earth will be for the sake of salvation; its purpose is purely to make those who love Him complete—thoroughly so—and to bring them into submission under His dominion. No matter how God saves people, it is all done by making them break away from their old satanic nature; that is, He saves them by having them seek life. If they do not do so, then they will have no way to accept God’s salvation. ... In the past, His means of salvation involved showing the utmost love and compassion, such that He gave His all to Satan in exchange for the whole of mankind. The present is nothing like the past: The salvation bestowed upon you today occurs at the time of the last days, during the classification of each according to kind; the means of your salvation is not love or compassion, but chastisement and judgment, in order that man may be more thoroughly saved. Thus, all that you receive is chastisement, judgment, and merciless smiting, but know this: In this heartless smiting there is not the slightest punishment. Regardless of how harsh My words might be, what befall you are but a few words that might appear utterly heartless to you, and no matter how angry I might be, what rain upon you are still words of teaching, and I do not mean to harm you or put you to death. Is this not all fact? Know that nowadays, whether it be righteous judgment or heartless refinement and chastisement, everything is for the sake of salvation. Regardless of whether today each is classified according to kind or the categories of

man are laid bare, the purpose of all of God's words and work is to save those who truly love God. Righteous judgment is brought to purify man, and heartless refinement is done to cleanse them; harsh words or chastening are both done to purify and are for the sake of salvation"

(The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. You Should Put Aside the Blessings of Status and Understand God's Will to Bring Salvation to Man). I used to think that God showed His love by bestowing grace and blessings upon people. I didn't understand why God said that His judgment and chastisement were also love. But then, I went through being judged, exposed, dealt with and refined by God's words, and gained some understanding of my arrogant, self-important satanic nature. I became less impudent, and became able to consciously pray to God and seek the truth in the face of a problem; I also became able to listen to other people's suggestions and live out a bit of a human likeness. This was how I truly experienced that God's judgment and chastisement are His salvation for mankind, that they are the truest kind of love.

The church was preparing to film a movie last year, and brothers and sisters recommended I take on the duty of director. I remember when I first started that duty, I felt a little nervous, but I prayed all the while to God and gradually my nerves were calmed, and I was able to go get my feet wet. I studied hard, learning about how to make movies, and slowly came to grasp some of those skills. And then, brothers and sisters kept adopting my ideas. After seeing the film I directed, they thought highly of it. The leader also said that I was cut out to be a director. I was so happy to hear that and thought to myself: "With a little more practice, I'll become competent, without a doubt." When working with brothers and sisters from then on, I wasn't as modest as I had been, but spoke with confidence, and I held my head up high. I also wanted to have the final say in everything and thought nothing of anyone else. The moment someone questioned my idea or made

another suggestion, I was unyielding, impatient, and looked down on them. I felt I surpassed them in every regard, that they should just do what I said instead of making such a fuss. And in my eyes, they were just bringing up really petty things that didn't even merit discussion. So I'd always ask "Is this a question of principle?" to shut them up. One time, Sister Zhang, the main character, had me look at costumes she'd picked. I thought, "How could you have such a terrible eye?" I had her choose all new ones. I shot down many of her clothing choices. I was filled with this idea of being the director, so I thought my sense was right and they should listen to me. The brothers and sisters ended up feeling constrained by me and didn't want to make suggestions anymore. I actually did feel bad when I saw this, but then I thought, "I'm only considering our work, and I can't be too off in this." So, I didn't think much of it. During that time, my leader gave me fellowship and exposed me, saying I was too arrogant and that I liked to control people, and warned me not to fix my gaze on others, but to reflect on myself and practice the truth to resolve my own problems. But I didn't have any understanding of my own nature then. I felt I was really responsible in my work. I just kept living in that kind of rebellious, obstinate state, and I was no longer able to work well with brothers and sisters. Over time, problems kept cropping up in our work, which hindered our progress.

One day, I heard a team leader I knew had been dismissed because of holding up work from being arrogant, unable to accept the truth, and constraining brothers and sisters. That left me feeling a little afraid. I knew I'd been behaving just like that team leader. I figured God was giving me a warning, so I decided I couldn't keep throwing my weight around like that. Instead, I should control myself, speak more kindly, and do my best to

communicate and discuss work with others. But I still didn't have any understanding of my own nature, so I didn't seek the truth to resolve it.

After a while, since progress in our team was so slow, the leader arranged for Sister Liu to work with me. At first I just couldn't accept it. I thought the leader must be doubting my capability, but since it had already been arranged, I reluctantly bit the bullet. In work discussions from then on, I found the leader always asked for Sister Liu's advice. I was really uneasy and felt the leader didn't think much of me. I started to resent her. But even more, I was resistant to Sister Liu. I couldn't accept her. So whenever we discussed our work I'd just sit there scowling in silence. One time, she found some issues with the team's work and made some suggestions that our brothers and sisters all really liked, but I was having none of it. I refused to listen to any of her suggestions. When everyone asked for my opinion, I bottled up my anger and said: "Whatever." The leader then dealt with me, saying I wasn't upholding the work of God's house. I did actually feel bad and I knew that no matter what, I couldn't keep taking out my frustration in the work of God's house. But I really couldn't swallow it. I thought, "If you just listen to Sister Liu all the time, what is there to discuss?" I kept thinking I was right in everything, so in the next few work discussions I clung to my own opinions and I disagreed with Sister Liu even when her suggestions were reasonable. I thought she was showing off. There was one time she recommended a certain actor and I brought up all sort of issues with that actor and shot her suggestion down. I just wasn't willing to listen to her. I wanted to be in charge of all the work. Sister Liu ended up feeling constrained by me and wouldn't make suggestions anymore. During that time, since I was living within an arrogant, self-righteous disposition and wasn't seeking the truth, my spirit slowly fell into darkness. I felt depressed every single day and it seemed God was hiding

Himself from me. I didn't have anything to say to God in prayer and God's words weren't sinking in when I read them. My mind was blank and I was obtuse in my duty. I couldn't see any problems. I was living in a state of anxiety and kept feeling like something was about to happen.

A few days later, our leader came to hold a gathering with us. She exposed my disposition and said I was too arrogant, that I was autocratic and arbitrary in my duty, and I'd really disrupted our work. She told me to go home to do some serious devotionals and self-reflection. I was shocked to hear that, but I prayed to God in earnest saying, "Oh God, no matter what situation I encounter, I believe it's all set up by You and I'm willing to submit." I couldn't sleep at all that night. I was thinking about how I'd been a director for so long, but that tomorrow I had to leave there. I couldn't let go of it and I was really upset, I couldn't hold back my tears. I wanted to use that chance to work on my devotionals and reflect on myself, so I could pick myself back up where I had stumbled. But back at home I couldn't focus on God's words and I was really having a hard time. All I could do was come before God and call out to Him over and over again. I said, "God, I'm in so much pain. Please help me and protect my heart so that I can understand Your will in this situation, and know myself." By constantly praying to God, I was finally able to feel some peace.

A few brothers and sisters came to check in on me the next day, to give me fellowship and help me, and they mentioned some of my issues. I remember that one sister said, "You become arrogant after achieving some results in your duty and you want to have the final say in everything. You're really controlling and there's just no way to work with you." A brother said, "In work discussions, we're all relaxed when you're not there, but as soon as you show up we're all on edge, afraid that you'll shoot down our thoughts and ideas." Every word out of their mouths was like a knife in my

heart. I was ashamed to face them and I felt so terrible. In all my life, I had never felt like such a failure as a person. It had gotten so bad that brothers and sisters didn't dare approach me, and were afraid when they saw me. I thought, "Am I still being a proper person? How could I have been so insensitive?" I had never realized that my arrogant disposition could constrain and do such harm to others. I already knew that I was arrogant and the leader fellowshipped with me often, but I'd never thought much of it. Instead, I thought my arrogance came from having a higher caliber. Who isn't arrogant if they're gifted and of high caliber? That's why I never sought the truth to resolve it. But through the help and fellowship of brothers and sisters, I finally found peace in my heart and could quiet myself to reflect on my behavior.

As I reflected, I read two passages of God's words. God says, **"If you really possess the truth within you, the path you walk will naturally be the correct path. Without the truth, it is easy to do evil, and you will do it despite yourself. For example, if arrogance and conceit existed within you, you would find it impossible to keep from defying God; you would feel compelled to defy Him. You would not do it on purpose; you would do it under the domination of your arrogant and conceited nature. Your arrogance and conceit would make you look down on God and see Him as being of no account; they would cause you to exalt yourself, constantly put yourself on display, and, finally, sit in God's place and bear testimony for yourself. In the end, you would turn your own ideas, your own thinking, and your own notions into truths to be worshiped. See how much evil is done by people under the dominance of their arrogant and conceited nature!"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only by Pursuing the Truth Can One Achieve a Change in Disposition). **"Arrogance is the root of man's corrupt disposition. The more arrogant people are,**

the more liable they are to resist God. How serious is this problem? Not only do people with arrogant dispositions consider everyone else beneath them, but, worst of all, they are even condescending toward God. Even though, externally, some people might appear to believe in God and follow Him, they do not treat Him as God at all. They always feel that they possess the truth and think the world of themselves. This is the essence and root of the arrogant disposition, and it comes from Satan. Therefore, the problem of arrogance must be resolved. Feeling that one is better than others—that is a trivial matter. The critical issue is that one’s arrogant disposition prevents one from submitting to God, His rule, and His arrangements; such a person always feels inclined to compete with God for power over others. This sort of person does not revere God in the slightest, to say nothing of loving God or submitting to Him” (God’s Fellowship). I realized from God’s words that my arrogance and conceitedness were causing me to rebel against and resist God. Since I’d done my duty as a director, when I had some success, I thought it was because of my own hard work, that I was better than others. I began to disregard others, and stubbornly hold to myself, wanting to have the final say in everything. When I failed to achieve results in my duty, I never reflected on whether the issue was with me, but just focused on my brothers and sisters. I condescendingly dealt with and lectured others. I looked down on everyone out of arrogance and conceitedness. I couldn’t see anyone else’s strengths, and thought my ideas were best. I shot down everyone’s suggestions at every turn, and was controlling. I failed to know myself because of my arrogance and conceitedness, and even after being pruned and dealt with many times, I wouldn’t accept it or reflect on myself. I had no desire for seeking. When my work progress slowed and it became clear I couldn’t manage the work, I still didn’t want to work with others or have

them meddle in my tasks. I felt it would compromise my authority and threaten my reputation and position. I wanted to be totally in charge, and I wanted to have the final say. Wasn't I walking the path of resistance to God? When Sister Liu had some success in her duty that threatened my position, I well knew she was right and what she suggested would benefit the work of God's house, but I wouldn't accept it. Instead I nitpicked, and when I saw our brothers and sisters agreeing with her, I just couldn't take it, and took out my frustration in church work. I was ready to see the work of God's house suffer to protect my own reputation and status. Where was my reverence for God? Where was my conscience and reason? I saw I'd been living by my arrogant and conceited satanic disposition, forcing my own thoughts and opinions on brothers and sisters as if they were the truth, making people listen to me in everything. Wasn't that wanting to be on par with God, and wanting to control others? I had long ago violated God's administrative decrees: **"Man should not magnify himself, nor exalt himself. He should worship and exalt God"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Ten Administrative Decrees That Must Be Obeyed by God's Chosen People in the Age of Kingdom). I finally realized I was in a precarious position. It looked like I was doing my duty every day, that I was passionate about expending myself, but I was revealing a satanic disposition in every way. My actions were all contrary to the truth, I was disrupting the church's work. I was doing evil, resisting God, and offending His disposition! I wondered how I had gotten to that point. It was because I had such an arrogant, rigid nature. I never accepted the truth, so I ended up bringing God's ire upon me. I saw that I'd been so deeply corrupted by Satan, that I totally lacked the reality of the truth. Being able to take on such an important duty was God elevating me, and having some success in my duty was entirely down to the Holy Spirit's work, not at all because I had any ability. I saw that when I relied on

my arrogant nature in my duty, the Holy Spirit stopped working and I couldn't figure anything out or resolve anything. But even so, I still felt like I was okay. I was arrogant beyond reason, without a shred of self-awareness. Only then did I start to feel disgust and hatred for my arrogant nature.

I later read these words from God: **“All of you live in a land of sin and licentiousness, and you are all licentious and sinful. Today you are not just able to look upon God, but more importantly, you have received chastisement and judgment, you have received truly profound salvation, which is to say, you have received God’s greatest love. In all that He does, God is truly loving toward you. He has no ill intention. It is because of your sins that He judges you, so that you will examine yourselves and receive this tremendous salvation. All this is done for the purpose of making man complete. From beginning to end, God has been doing His utmost to save man, and has no desire to completely destroy the men He created with His own hands. Today, He has come among you to work; is this not salvation all the more? If He hated you, would He still do work of such magnitude in order to personally guide you? Why should He suffer so? God does not hate you or have any ill intentions toward you. You should know that God’s love is the truest love. It is only because people are disobedient that He has to save them through judgment; if not for this, saving them would be impossible”**

(The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Inside Truth of the Work of Conquest (4)). I read God’s words over and over. I had such a feeling of warmth and I was so moved. I saw that, by revealing me that way, God wasn’t condemning or eliminating me, and He wasn’t making things difficult for me on purpose. He was really doing it for my salvation. I have such an arrogant, rigid nature and God knew what I needed. By losing my duty and

being pruned and dealt with by brothers and sisters, I came to know my own arrogant disposition and could reflect on the path I'd taken, and truly repent to God so I wouldn't rebel against and resist Him anymore. Though I experienced pain and negativity through that process, without that kind of judgment and chastisement, my numb heart couldn't have been awakened. I couldn't have reflected on my behavior or come to know God's righteous disposition. I couldn't have truly repented to God, but only would have kept opposing Him, ultimately offending His disposition and being punished. I finally experienced for myself that the judgment and revelation of God's words were His protection for me, and the truest love. I was so grateful to God when I realized this and felt I should pursue the truth in earnest in the future so I could cast off my corrupt disposition and live out a human likeness soon.

After that I kept praying and seeking. I wondered how I could stop living by my arrogant disposition and stop resisting God. While seeking, I read these words from God: **“An arrogant nature makes you willful. When people have this willful disposition, are they not prone to being arbitrary and rash? How, then, do you resolve your arbitrariness and rashness? When you have an idea, you tell it to others and say what you think and believe about this matter, and then, you communicate with everyone about it. First, you can shed light on your view and seek the truth; this is the first step you put into practice in order to overcome this disposition of being arbitrary and rash. The second step happens when other people voice dissenting opinions—what practice can you put in place to keep from being arbitrary and rash? You must first have an attitude of humility, set aside what you believe to be right, and let everyone have fellowship. Even if you believe your way to be correct, you should not keep insisting on it. That, first of all, is a kind of**

step forward; it shows an attitude of seeking the truth, of denying yourself, and of satisfying God's will. Once you have this attitude, at the same time that you do not adhere to your own opinion, you pray. As you do not know right from wrong, you allow God to reveal and tell you what the best, most suitable thing to do is. As everyone joins in fellowship, the Holy Spirit brings you all enlightenment" (God's Fellowship).

I found a path of practice from God's words. If I didn't want to live in arrogance or be arbitrary in my duty, I had to have a heart of truth seeking and reverence for God. I had to cooperate with brothers and sisters, and when there was a difference of opinion, I should be able to deny myself and put my ego aside, pray to God and seek the truth. Only with that mindset would I be more easily enlightened by the Holy Spirit, and I'd never go so far as to rebel against and resist God and damage the work of God's house for clinging to my own ideas. Realizing all of this was like a light shining in my heart. I made this prayer: "God, from now on, I wish to work harmoniously with brothers and sisters so we can seek the truth together and do our duty in accordance with principles."

Shortly after that I was asked to write out a few lines of calligraphy for my duty. When I heard this, I thought, "A few characters of calligraphy is nothing. I've studied calligraphy, so I'm pretty confident about doing this." I wrote out a couple versions, and after looking at them Sister Liu said, "I guess that's not bad." I felt averse toward her again just then and thought, "You say that so reluctantly. Was my calligraphy really that bad? I studied this, it's something I'm good at. Don't I know more about it than you? I can tell you don't have an eye for this kind of thing, and you're intentionally nitpicking." But as those thoughts were running through my mind, I suddenly realized I was wrong. Wasn't that revealing an arrogant disposition again? I lost no time in coming before God in prayer: "Oh God,

I want to have a seeking and obedient attitude, to put myself aside, and give my all for my duty.” I wrote out another version with that mindset, and when Sister Liu saw it, she gave more suggestions, asking if I could make it neater. A number of brothers and sisters actually said it looked just fine. Based on how I’d been before, if I thought I was right and other people agreed with me too, there was nothing more to be said, and I’d dig my heels in more. But that wasn’t my thinking at the time. I thought, “The brothers and sisters are bringing up different viewpoints as they are thinking about our duty. No one is doing it to make things difficult for anyone. And my ideas aren’t necessarily right. In the end, we have to decide what will achieve the best results in our duty.” With this in mind, I took the initiative and said: “How about I draw up another version and you guys can decide which is the best. Use whichever one you like more.” When writing with that mindset I felt so calm and at peace, and losing face didn’t even occur to me. After I was done, I asked them for more feedback and the brothers and sisters gave me more suggestions. They were all valid points. What I felt then was that I had actually had a lot of faults and that brothers and sisters had a lot of strong points I didn’t possess. A lot of their ideas and suggestions made up for my weaknesses. So through everyone’s help, through making up for each other’s weak points, we were more successful in our duty in the end. After working with brothers and sisters this way for a while I started feeling really at peace, and much closer to everyone else. I wasn’t as impudent or high and mighty as before, and I wasn’t difficult when others got close to me. I also found that it wasn’t so hard to accept brothers’ and sisters’ suggestions, and I was able to take what they told me about my deficiencies in the right way. Some things happened that I didn’t like, and I did reveal some arrogance, but with brothers’ and sisters’ reminders I was able to come before God right away. I was willing to put

myself aside, seek the truth, and carry out my duty in accordance with principles. After going through all this, what I really experienced from my heart was a sense of real happiness. I saw that I could finally put some of God's words into practice, which had been so hard for me before. Putting myself aside and accepting others' suggestions was so hard, but I am now able to practice a little bit of God's words. I can finally live out a bit of a human likeness. I'm not as impudent as I was before, I'm not so loathsome to God, and I'm not constraining others like I did before. Whenever I think of all that, I feel so grateful to God. If it hadn't been for God dealing with me and pruning me, without the judgment and revelations of His words, I have no idea how arrogant or depraved I might be now. The tiny bit of understanding and change I've achieved today is entirely down to the judgment and chastisement of God's words.

68. Reaping a Harvest From Being Pruned and Dealt With

By Youxin, South Korea

Almighty God says: **“People cannot change their own disposition; they must undergo the judgment and chastisement, and suffering and refinement, of God’s words, or being dealt with, disciplined, and pruned by His words. Only then can they achieve obedience and faithfulness to God, and no longer be perfunctory toward Him. It is under the refinement of God’s words that people’s dispositions change. Only through the exposure, judgment, discipline, and dealing of His words will they no longer dare to act rashly but instead will become steady and composed. The most important point is that they are able to submit to God’s current words, and to His work, even if it is not in line with human notions, they are able to put these notions aside and willingly submit”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. People Whose Dispositions Have Changed Are Those Who Have Entered Into the Reality of God’s Words).

When I read these words of God before, **“People cannot change their own disposition; they must undergo the judgment and chastisement, and suffering and refinement, of God’s words, or being dealt with, disciplined, and pruned by His words. Only then can they achieve obedience and faithfulness to God, and no longer be perfunctory toward Him,”** I couldn’t quite understand why people couldn’t change their own dispositions. I read God’s words earnestly every day, I always attended gatherings on time, and I submitted to whatever duty I was assigned by the church. I figured as long as I didn’t sin, did my duty well, had been a believer for years, and had read God’s words a lot, then surely my corrupt disposition would change. Why did I still have to be judged and

chastised, and pruned and dealt with by God? I never truly understood these words of God until after I had been harshly pruned and dealt with a few times, and reflected on myself. Only then did I see how deeply corrupted by Satan I was, that my arrogant and conceited satanic nature was deeply rooted in me, and without being judged and chastised, and being pruned and dealt with by God, I'd never know myself, much less be purified or transformed.

In early 2016 I was doing the duty of a church leader. When I first started out, I felt I was really lacking a lot, so I constantly prayed to God and leaned on Him in my duty. I'd seek and fellowship with co-workers when I encountered an issue I didn't understand, and I was able to accept other people's suggestions. I was pretty humble. After more than six months of practice, I had a grasp of some principles and I could help resolve some brothers' and sisters' difficulties by fellowshipping on the truth. I slowly started becoming complacent, thinking, "Even though I've never been a church leader before, I have good caliber and I'm quick to understand God's words. After more practice I'm sure I'll get even better." I was later given responsibility for an important duty and became even more smug. I was the youngest among my co-workers and I'd been in the faith for less time, but I felt that to be able to take on something so important, I must really be talented! For a while, I held my head up high even when I was walking, feeling like I had the most important duty out of everyone, as if no one could equal me. Over time, I became more and more arrogant. In discussions on church work, when co-workers made suggestions, I'd stick to my own ideas, thinking, "Is it really the way you're making it out to be? I've handled things like this before, so don't I have a better understanding of the principles? I know the best way to deal with this matter." Sometimes when the sister I worked with took something a little too seriously, I'd lose

patience, thinking that such a simple matter was easy to take care of and there was no need to go fellowshiping and seeking over and over again. Sometimes in co-workers' meetings, I saw her suggestions weren't adopted by other brothers and sisters, and I began to look down on her. I thought, "Even though you have been a leader longer than me, you have nothing on me at all." One time she told me that I dragged my feet in my duty, that my progress was slow. I couldn't take it and retorted, "I can't accept this fellowship from you. Aren't you involved in this work, too? Are you not responsible for it as well? How can you be so lacking in self-awareness and just push everything onto me?" At that, I just got up and walked out. The leader later learned about my behavior and dealt with me, saying I was too arrogant. I just verbally acknowledged it, saying, "I am too arrogant, and I don't accept the truth." I didn't reflect on or try to understand my nature and essence, and in my duty I kept swaggering around, doing things my own way. I had some co-workers at that time who were replaced because they were lacking in caliber and they couldn't do practical work. But I'd never been concerned about being replaced. I thought, "I'm a real talent in the church now and I'm responsible for quite a few tasks. Without me, would they be able to find another suitable person on short notice?" Just as I was becoming senselessly arrogant, I was pruned and dealt with pretty sternly.

Once, I read some articles of experience and testimony by brothers and sisters that I felt were a little superficial. I rejected them without even discussing the matter with anyone. The leader got really angry when he found out about this. He asked me, "Why'd you reject such good articles? Did you even discuss it with co-workers?" I said, "No, at the time I just felt that they were kind of superficial." No sooner had I said this than the leader dealt with me sternly, saying, "Though these articles may be a little

superficial, their experiences are genuine and they show practical understanding. They're edifying for people. That's what makes a good personal experience testimonial. You don't seek the truth in your duty, and you're wanton and arrogant. You don't understand the truth or discuss things with others. Just tossing out perfectly good articles, stifling testimonies of experiencing God's work, isn't that foolish? Isn't that something Satan would do? You are just being disruptive!" I'd been pruned and dealt with before, but never that harshly. The words "foolish," "Satan," "disruptive," "wanton and arrogant" kept echoing in my head over and over, and I couldn't hold back the tears. I felt like I was even having a hard time breathing. Yet I still felt wronged. Even though I hadn't discussed it with my co-workers at the time, hadn't I told them about it afterward? God really does see into our innermost hearts. Just as I was thinking of excuses, the leader went on sternly, "You're a law unto yourself in your actions. You could ask when you don't understand something or discuss it with the others, but you don't even do that. You're so arrogant and totally lacking a God-fearing heart!" At this, I reluctantly submitted. If I really did have a bit of a God-fearing heart, I would've done some seeking before taking action, but instead I just did things however I wanted without asking for others' opinions. I really was arrogant and self-righteous.

The leader conducted an inquiry on me and found that I was too arrogant, that I didn't understand the truth, and that I wasn't fit for such an important duty, and so I was replaced. I really fell into a state of negativity. I felt that the leader had seen right through me with this issue and thought I wasn't someone who pursued the truth, that I was incredibly arrogant, and wasn't even worth cultivating. I thought I didn't have any prospects in God's house anymore. I became more and more negative, and I was filled with misunderstandings. I felt like I had become Satan. How could I even

be saved? I figured the brothers and sisters definitely thought I wasn't the right sort of person, so what good would it do to continue pursuing? During that time, though I reluctantly appeared to be doing some duties, I didn't want to pursue the truth. The responsible person fellowshipped with me on God's will a number of times, but I didn't turn myself around. She then pruned and dealt with me, saying I was intentionally difficult in my duty, always negative, that I was opposing God, and if I didn't make a change, I'd be eliminated by God sooner or later. Hearing this scared me, and I realized the gravity of the situation. I hurried to come before God to pray and seek, and to reflect on myself. Over those six months, why hadn't I been able to properly handle being pruned and dealt with? As I reflected, I read these words of God: **"Some people become passive after being pruned and dealt with; they lose all energy to perform their duties, and end up losing their loyalty as well. Why is this? It is partly due to their lack of awareness of the essence of their actions, and this leads to their not being able to submit to being pruned and dealt with. This is determined by their nature that is arrogant and conceited, and that has no love for the truth. It is also partly due to their not understanding what the significance of being pruned and dealt with is. People all believe that being pruned and dealt with means that their outcomes have been determined. As a result, they mistakenly believe that if they possess some loyalty to God, then they should not be dealt with and pruned; and, if they are dealt with, then this is not indicative of God's love and righteousness. Such misunderstanding causes many people to dare not be 'loyal' to God. Actually, when all is said and done, it is because they are overly deceitful; they do not want to suffer hardship. They just want to obtain blessings the easy way. People are not aware of God's righteousness. It is not that He has not done anything**

righteous or that He is not doing anything righteous; it is simply that people never believe that what God does is righteous. In human eyes, if God's work does not conform to their human desires, or if it is not in line with what they expected, then He must not be righteous. However, people never know that their actions are inappropriate and do not conform to the truth, nor do they ever realize that their actions resist God" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The Implications of God's Determination of People's Outcomes Based on Performance). After reading this revelation in God's words, I finally understood that the reason I'd been so negative was that I was too arrogant and conceited and didn't recognize the nature of my own behavior. I thought I'd just made a mistake, that dealing with me like that was way over the top. That's why I stayed stuck in negativity, misunderstanding God and being defensive. While reading God's words I asked myself if I'd really been pruned and dealt with so harshly for just one single mistake. There are principles in how God's house deals with people. It's all based on people's nature and essence, and their general behavior. The leader didn't deal with me for no good reason. So then, what problems really existed within me that resulted in me being pruned and dealt with so sternly?

I later read these words of God: **"If you really possess the truth within you, the path you walk will naturally be the correct path. Without the truth, it is easy to do evil, and you will do it despite yourself. For example, if arrogance and conceit existed within you, you would find it impossible to keep from defying God; you would feel compelled to defy Him. You would not do it on purpose; you would do it under the domination of your arrogant and conceited nature. Your arrogance and conceit would make you look down on God and see Him as being of no account; they would cause you to exalt yourself,**

constantly put yourself on display, and, finally, sit in God's place and bear testimony for yourself. In the end, you would turn your own ideas, your own thinking, and your own notions into truths to be worshiped. See how much evil is done by people under the dominance of their arrogant and conceited nature! To resolve their evil acts, they must first resolve the problem of their nature. Without a change in disposition, it would not be possible to bring a fundamental resolution to this problem" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only by Pursuing the

Truth Can One Achieve a Change in Disposition). There are also sermons that mention that when some people have some gifts, or have some caliber, they look down on others. They don't want to listen to anyone else, thinking they're better than everyone else. That kind of person is arrogant, conceited, and self-righteous. I thought about how since I'd been a believer, I hadn't focused on pursuing the truth, but had done my duty by relying on my caliber and my arrogant disposition. I felt I was well-spoken and had some small successes in my duty, so the leader really valued me. I thought I was great and capable in work, more so than the others, so I didn't think much of the brothers and sisters I worked with. I insisted on doing things my own way, and my arrogant disposition grew and grew. Later on, I developed a really casual attitude toward the church's work. I never sought the principles of the truth or went seeking or fellowshiped with others. Instead, I did things arbitrarily, however I wanted to, and ended up disrupting the church's work. I always felt like I was of good caliber and that I understood some of the truth, but only after I was exposed did I finally see that what I understood was just a bit of doctrine, that I didn't have a shred of the reality of the truth, nor could I fellowship on the truth to resolve practical issues. Despite this, I was still incredibly arrogant and acted unilaterally in everything. I was arrogant to the point that I'd lost all reason and had lost

sight of God. My issue was only exposed when the leader came to review my work. I thought about how I'd been doing my duty that way all along. Not only had I not helped or benefited my brothers and sisters, but I'd also revealed so many corrupt dispositions that constrained them. I hadn't been doing my duty, I'd been simply doing evil! The more I thought about it, the more alarmed I became. I knew that when someone acts out of arrogance, it's impossible for them to avoid resisting God and doing evil. I thought about some brothers and sisters who seemed to be of lower caliber than me, but they were careful and attentive in their duties. They knew how to seek the truth and accept others' viewpoints, while I was so arrogant that I was utterly lacking in self-awareness. I had absolutely no awareness of how to seek the truth. The more I reflected, the more I felt my path wasn't one of pursuing the truth. I had been so arrogant and had thought nothing of God, so when I was pruned and dealt with, and dismissed from my duty, that was actually God protecting and saving me. Without that, who knows how much more evil I might have done. I would've even gotten to the point of no return and facing expulsion. Then it would be too late for regrets. After understanding God's good intentions, I was filled with remorse. For the past six months, I'd been misunderstanding and blaming God, being negative and slacking off in work. I just couldn't be reasoned with! From then on, I just wanted to do my duty well to make up for my past transgressions.

Six months later, I was elected as a team leader. At the time, I was really afraid that I'd stumble and fail again because of my arrogant nature. When issues cropped up in my duty, I was pretty cautious, and I often held discussions and fellowshiped with the brothers and sisters who worked with me, seeking the truth to resolve problems within the church. I felt much more at ease when I was doing my duty that way and I was getting along much better with brothers and sisters. A few months later I saw some

success in my duty and began to feel secretly delighted again, thinking that I must be a real talent, and that no matter what duty I was doing, I could get things going quickly. Over time, my arrogant disposition started to rear its head again. Sometimes when brothers and sisters had issues they wanted to seek about with the leader, I would lose my patience with them. I would think, “Haven’t we sought about this before? Why do you need to seek more? I know the principles, so my fellowship should be adequate.” Without thinking things over, I would share my understanding with brothers and sisters and want them to accept it, but they felt uneasy and then sought about the matter with the leader. The leader later fellowshiped with us on the principles of practice, which were different from what I’d understood before. I was taken by surprise, and I thought, “Thank goodness for seeking, otherwise our duty would have been impacted.” But after the fact, I didn’t reflect on or try to know myself. I remained arrogant and unreasonable. When I saw mistakes in brothers’ and sisters’ duties, I scolded them imperiously, thinking, “If you can’t even get this little thing right, what can you do? I don’t think you’re putting your heart into it.” Over time, the others started feeling constrained by me and began to distance themselves. I constrained one sister so much that she didn’t even want to do her duty anymore. I did know I was in the wrong, but whenever something came up, I just couldn’t help but reveal my arrogant disposition. Thinking of how I’d stumbled and failed before, I did feel a faint sense of fear, but at that time I didn’t seek the truth to resolve the problem.

I later made the unilateral decision to have a sister take on an important duty. A brother warned me that she was deceitful, that she wasn’t well-suited to an important duty. I thought, “She does have a bit of an issue, but it’s not as bad as you say it is. Who doesn’t have corruptions and shortcomings?” I didn’t take this brother’s suggestion seriously at all, but

just sought out the sister for fellowship and reminded her of her issues. I was shocked later when she turned out to be totally two-faced and negligent in her duty. This caused a severe loss to the work of God's house. When the leader found out about this, he dealt with me very sternly, saying: "You just did your own thing, promoting a deceitful person. A brother warned you, but you didn't listen to him or look into it yourself. And now it's had really serious consequences and created such a large disruption. This is down to your lack of responsibility in your duty. You don't understand the truth and you're arrogant. You must be replaced!" Being pruned and dealt with so severely was excruciating for me. I'd been dismissed from my duty right in front of so many other brothers and sisters, and the leader had stressed what a disruption I'd caused and that I had to be replaced. I felt like that was it for me, that I'd certainly be eliminated, and to pursue any longer was useless. I became really negative after I was replaced. I'd think about what had happened in bed every night and start crying. I felt too ashamed to see anyone else for quite a while. I saw that the brothers and sisters were all happily doing their duties and felt like I was nothing like them because of my arrogant nature. Without discussing it with anyone or taking advice, I had promoted a deceitful person, seriously disrupting the church's work. Could I still be saved by God? I never imagined my path of faith would come to an end at such a young age. I even started to suspect that when God said being pruned and dealt with was salvation, not elimination, that didn't apply to me. My heart was full of misunderstandings. Once when the leader came to fellowship on work with us, I hid in the very farthest corner. I was really taken aback when he suddenly called my name and asked me what progress I'd made recently. He went on to ask if I'd become negative after being pruned and dealt with, and then he earnestly fellowshiped with me and exhorted me, saying "You're still young. You should pursue the truth

and focus on dispositional change.” Hearing these heartfelt words from the leader was so comforting and encouraging for me that I couldn’t stop crying. I’d been so arrogant and conceited, irresponsible and slipshod in my duty, and had seriously harmed the church’s work. The leader had been right to replace me and to prune and deal with me, but I never imagined he’d also encourage me. I thanked God from my heart for His mercy. That night, I prayed to God through my tears and resolved to really and truly reflect on myself, and seek the truth to resolve my arrogant disposition.

I later read this passage of God’s words: **“Arrogance is the root of man’s corrupt disposition. The more arrogant people are, the more liable they are to resist God. How serious is this problem? Not only do people with arrogant dispositions consider everyone else beneath them, but, worst of all, they are even condescending toward God. Even though, externally, some people might appear to believe in God and follow Him, they do not treat Him as God at all. They always feel that they possess the truth and think the world of themselves. This is the essence and root of the arrogant disposition, and it comes from Satan. Therefore, the problem of arrogance must be resolved. Feeling that one is better than others—that is a trivial matter. The critical issue is that one’s arrogant disposition prevents one from submitting to God, His rule, and His arrangements; such a person always feels inclined to compete with God for power over others. This sort of person does not revere God in the slightest, to say nothing of loving God or submitting to Him. People who are arrogant and conceited, especially those who are so arrogant as to have lost their sense, cannot submit to God in their belief in Him, and even exalt and bear testimony for themselves. Such people resist God the most. If people wish to get to where they revere God, then they must first resolve their arrogant dispositions.**

The more thoroughly you resolve your arrogant disposition, the more reverence you will have for God, and only then can you submit to Him and be able to obtain the truth and know Him” (God’s Fellowship). Only through the revelation of God’s words did I see that acting based on my arrogant nature wasn’t merely an issue of revealing a bit of corruption, but mainly it made me totally disregard others and even God. It led me to rebel against and resist God, in spite of myself. Thinking back on when I’d been doing my duty, I always felt like I was a clever person and was of good caliber, so I relied on my gifts and my caliber to do my duty. I had so much confidence in myself that I hardly ever prayed to God or sought the principles of the truth. There was no place for God in my heart at all. When my duty bore no fruit, I was better-behaved, but the moment I understood the principles a bit and had a little success, I used that as my capital. I felt anything I did would be fine, I could do anything, that I could assess people and situations, and so I became even more arrogant, conceited and self-righteous, going my own way in everything, being autocratic. I even stood in the way of brothers and sisters seeking the truth with the leader and imposed my thinking upon them, as if it were the truth, getting them to accept it and submit to it. The facts showed me that I was acting according to my arrogant nature, that I did nothing but constrain and harm brothers and sisters, and seriously disrupt the work of the church. I had even played the part of Satan’s minion. The leader dealing with me, calling out this severe disruption, was entirely correct. Being dismissed from my duty completely showed God’s righteousness. I finally saw how terrifying, how deadly that kind of arrogant nature is. If it’s left unresolved, I could be liable to do evil and resist God at any point, and I could disrupt the work of God’s house, offend God’s disposition, and be eliminated and punished. After I was replaced other problems in my duty came to light. Faced with

brothers' and sisters' reproaches, and the problems exposed in my work, I felt a lot of regret and self-reproach. I really hated myself. Why was I so arrogant? I had always felt like I was talented, that anything I did was fine, but had I done even a handful of things that satisfied God? The duty I'd performed was a tattered mess, and I'd been nothing but disruptive. If I'd had even a modicum of reverence for God, if I'd prayed or sought more, or if I'd fellowshiped and discussed things with others, if I'd been just a little more cautious, I wouldn't have gotten to the point of me doing so much in defiance of God.

In my effort to resolve my arrogant nature, I later read some of God's words, **"People cannot change their own disposition; they must undergo the judgment and chastisement, and suffering and refinement, of God's words, or being dealt with, disciplined, and pruned by His words. Only then can they achieve obedience and faithfulness to God, and no longer be perfunctory toward Him. It is under the refinement of God's words that people's dispositions change. Only through the exposure, judgment, discipline, and dealing of His words will they no longer dare to act rashly but instead will become steady and composed. The most important point is that they are able to submit to God's current words, and to His work, even if it is not in line with human notions, they are able to put these notions aside and willingly submit"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. People Whose Dispositions Have Changed Are Those Who Have Entered Into the Reality of God's Words). Reading this passage again, I really appreciate that the only path to resolving a person's arrogant nature is to accept being judged, chastised, pruned, and dealt with by God. Our corruption by Satan goes so deep, so if we just rely on reading God's words and personal reflection, our understanding of ourselves will be superficial and our corrupt dispositions won't change. Without God exposing me,

pruning and dealing with me time after time, I'd still be overconfident and think I was really something. I wouldn't know myself at all. I really wouldn't know just how arrogant I was or how serious my satanic disposition was. Now, when I think back on everything I did, I feel so ashamed and full of regret. I cringe to think of it and can't even hold my head up. But it was precisely that kind of painful lesson that allowed me to gain a little understanding of my arrogant nature, and to know where I was likely to stumble and fail. It also gave me some reverence for God. I also saw that I completely lacked both the reality of the truth and a truth-seeking heart in my duty. I was presumptuous, arbitrary, and disruptive. And I fell far short of those brothers and sisters of average caliber, but who did their duty conscientiously. My arrogance was baseless. After realizing all this, I was more humble in my duty and wasn't overly confident anymore. I consciously practiced putting myself aside and denying myself, I sought the principles of the truth more and listened to brothers and sisters more. I started having open discussions to resolve any problems in the church. Sometimes when I showed my arrogance again, or violated principles in my duty, I would practice putting myself aside, and accept being pruned and dealt with, as well as others' guidance and help. Over time, I felt that practicing that way was really beneficial. Since my understanding of the truth was shallow and I lacked insight in a lot of things, by working with brothers and sisters and getting everyone's views aligned, I could gain more understanding of things. By doing my duty that way, before I knew it, I had God's protection. I no longer made big mistakes or had big issues, and under the supervision of brothers and sisters, my arrogant nature was reined in a bit. Putting this into practice gave me a sense of peace and calm, and gradually, I was acting out of arrogance less and less. Once, the sister working alongside me said, "I've known you for almost two years now. You

used to be so arrogant and other people always felt constrained by you, but now you've really changed." At that point I felt like I was about to cry. I had been so incredibly arrogant. Changing even this little bit hadn't come easily. Thinking back over the last few years, those two unforgettable times of being pruned and dealt with were the most helpful and beneficial for me. If I hadn't gone through that, even now I'm certain I wouldn't possess normal humanity, that I wouldn't think of God at all. I'd be on a dangerous precipice, on the verge of opposing God at any moment. I now truly know that being pruned and dealt with is God's protection and salvation for me.

69. Getting Back on the Right Track

By Chen Guang, USA

Almighty God says, **“Serving God is no simple task. Those whose corrupt disposition remains unchanged can never serve God. If your disposition has not been judged and chastised by God’s words, then your disposition still represents Satan, which proves that you serve God out of your own good intentions, that your service is based on your satanic nature. You serve God with your natural character, and according to your personal preferences. What’s more, you always think that the things you are willing to do are what are delightful to God, and that the things you do not wish to do are what are hateful to God; you work entirely according to your own preferences. Can this be called serving God? Ultimately, there will not be the slightest change in your life disposition; instead, your service will make you even more stubborn, thus deeply ingraining your corrupt disposition, and as such, there will be formed within you rules about service to God that are primarily based on your own character, and experiences derived from your service according to your own disposition. These are the experiences and lessons of man. It is man’s philosophy of living in the world. People like this can be classed as Pharisees and religious officials. If they never wake up and repent, then they will surely turn into the false Christs and the antichrists who deceive people in the last days”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Religious Service Must Be Purged).

When I read this passage, **“Serving God is no simple task. Those whose corrupt disposition remains unchanged can never serve God. If your disposition has not been judged and chastised by God’s words, then your disposition still represents Satan,”** I feel deeply moved. I have

experienced failure in the past. At the time, I fulfilled my duty based on an arrogant disposition, and was very boastful. I showed off, preaching superficial words and doctrines to make people think highly of me and adore me, and without even being aware of it, I had set foot upon the path of resisting God. It was only later, by means of the judgment and revelations of God's words, that I came to recognize the source of my resistance against God and my satanic nature, and began to repent to God.

It was in 2013 that I was chosen to be a church leader. Back then I was quite enthusiastic. Whenever I saw my brothers and sisters in a predicament, I would fellowship with them on God's words to help them resolve their problems. Once everyone's difficulties had been resolved, they could fulfill their duties as normal. After a few months, my leader said to me, "There is a church that has a relatively large number of newly joined brothers and sisters, and your co-workers have all recommended that you go there and serve as a leader." Full of confidence, I accepted. I just thought that I had to do a good job of watering those brothers and sisters so that they could understand the truth as quickly as possible and lay foundations on the true way. After I arrived at the church, I got an understanding of the overall situation there, and I also took notes on the brothers' and sisters' problems and difficulties, planning to look up relevant passages of God's words afterward to fellowship and resolve their issues. I just felt that because I was new on the scene there, a lot of the brothers and sisters did not know me, and so I had to put in effort and gather with them to fellowship more. If I could do a good job on the church's work within a short period of time, then these brothers and sisters were sure to feel that I possessed the reality of the truth, and was capable in my work—and when that happened, then my leaders, too, would think highly of me. The church then issued a notice of the truths that were to be entered at that stage, and

that we had to find relevant passages of God's words to fellowship on. I felt quite elated because this was a perfect opportunity to prove myself. So I found some utterances of God that related to all these aspects of the truth, and then gave special care to organizing them, all the while thinking, "It just so happens that a co-worker gathering is being held tomorrow. My co-workers will see that I spent all night looking up these words of God, and surely they'll say I'm conscientious and responsible in my duty." And so, it was nearly daybreak before I finished preparing. Sure enough, during the gathering, after seeing the words of God I had looked up, my co-workers all looked at me with admiration. Some said, "Brother Chen is so conscientious. He spent all night looking up all these relevant passages of God's words." Some said, "So true! It looks like Brother Chen reads God's words a lot." Another brother said with concern, "Brother Chen, how late did you have to stay up before you found all these passages of God's words?" Hearing all this made me feel ecstatic. My staying up till dawn hadn't been in vain, and my brothers and sisters could see how much effort I'd put in. Masking the excitement I felt inside, I said, "It was nearly dawn when I finished looking them up. I often stay up all night to fulfill my duty, as it should be. It's nothing to brag about. I had to make sure my brothers and sisters didn't get held up from being able to fellowship at gatherings." He then said I was conscientious in my duty, and that I was able to stay up all night and endure hardship. My heart swelled with a rush of happiness. I had to keep working hard so that my brothers and sisters would all say I was a competent leader.

Later on, as the work of spreading the gospel progressed, we established a few more churches. Every day, I worked from dawn to dusk, going around to every church to water my brothers and sisters. I would read God's words to anyone in difficulty, patiently fellowshiping to resolve their

problems, and people's opinions of me grew even higher. Once, a few brothers and sisters encountered a problem while spreading the gospel and were unable to resolve it. They grew negative and weak, so they came to me to fellowship about it. I shared with them my experiences with spreading the gospel in the past. I said, "The people I was spreading the gospel to had notions and wouldn't accept it. Some of them kicked me out of their homes. At the time, I thought it was really hard, too, so I constantly prayed to God. I stayed up all night looking for related passages of His words, and time and again I went to fellowship with those people to fix their problems. I did it so they would be able to hear God's voice and be granted His salvation in the last days. No matter how much humiliation and difficulty I faced, I refused to give up. In the end, I brought them all into the fold...." When I was done talking, a brother said admiringly, "Brother Chen is really able to endure hardship. He really shoulders the burden." Some said, "We should all spread the gospel the way Brother Chen does." When I saw what a high opinion these brothers and sisters had of me, I felt like I was on cloud nine. After that, others who encountered difficulties in their duties would come to seek me out for help, and very few went to the brother I worked alongside. While fulfilling their duties, brothers and sisters would actively do anything I asked of them. Seeing how highly they thought of me, I started appreciating myself more and more; I felt like I had become a pillar of the church.

During one gathering, I went on and on about how much I had suffered and what prices I had paid in my duty, and what results I had achieved. A sister suddenly said to me, "Brother Chen, most of what I hear you saying is about how much you suffered and expended while fulfilling your duty, but you haven't talked about what weaknesses you had when you encountered hardship or what corrupt dispositions you revealed, or what knowledge you

gained of yourself, or how you sought the truth to resolve your difficulties. It makes it seem like you don't have any corruption at all....” After she was finished saying this, the others all just looked at me. I was stunned. I felt put on the spot, and my face flushed. Inwardly, I thought, “Talking to me like that has made me look bad in front of all these brothers and sisters. What are they going to think of me?” In an effort to claw back some pride, I quickly said, “Sister, what you have fellowshiped is correct, and I can accept it. However, our brothers and sisters are encountering difficulties in their duties, and they grow negative and weak. We should not just talk about our corruption. We have to fellowship more on positive practices; this is the only way our brothers and sisters can have a path forward and find their faith....” Later on, some other brothers and sisters told me that when talking about my experiences and knowledge, I had skipped over most of the corruption that had been revealed in me, and that since I had spoken so much on how I had suffered, what prices I had paid, and how I had forsaken my flesh in my duty, it had made me seem really adept at practicing the truth. Faced with these cautions from my brothers and sisters, I felt a bit ill at ease and thought, “Are these things I've been fellowshiping on really not suitable? Sometimes I did fellowship on how I was arrogant and selfish. Moreover, I have always achieved very good results in my duty, and have not impeded the church's work. So that means there shouldn't be anything wrong with how I've been fellowshiping.” And so, I did not reflect on myself in earnest.

Later on, because of the needs of church work, I was transferred to another church to continue my duty. During a gathering with my co-workers, Brother Zhang said to me in a grave tone, “Brother Chen, since you left that other church, some brothers and sisters there have lost interest in doing their duties. Whenever they encounter some difficulty, they neither

read God's words nor seek the truth; they just want you to solve their problems. Some have even stopped wanting to attend gatherings. This shows that you have not been exalting God or bearing testimony for Him in your duty. You have just been showing off so that others will think highly of you and adore you. This is an act of evil, and you need to spend some time reflecting on yourself!" After hearing what he had to say, I was flabbergasted and thought, "How has this happened? My brothers and sisters all adore me? This is a serious problem!" I felt very apprehensive. After that, I didn't hear any of what was fellowshiped during the gathering; my head was all a jumble. I had no idea how I was to get through this situation. After I got home, I kept mulling over Brother Zhang's words. Originally, I'd thought my duty had yielded some results and that I could fellowship on the truth to resolve some problems. Never in a thousand years would I have thought it would have this sort of consequence. Actually, this had upset me greatly. In my helplessness, I prayed to God. I said, "God, please enlighten me so that I can find the source of my problem and have a real understanding of myself."

Later, I saw some of God's words, **"All of those who go downhill exalt themselves and bear testimony to themselves. They go around boasting about themselves and self-aggrandizing, and they have not taken God to heart at all. Do you have any experience of what I am talking about? Many people are constantly bearing testimony to themselves: 'I've suffered in this way and that; I've done this work and that; God has treated me in this way and that; He asked me to do such and such; He thinks especially highly of me; now I'm like this and that.' They deliberately speak in a certain tone and adopt certain postures. Ultimately, some people end up thinking that these people are God. Once they have gotten to that point, the Holy Spirit will long since**

have abandoned them. Although, for the meantime, they are ignored, and not expelled, their fate is set, and all they can do is to await their punishment” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. People Make Too Many Demands of God). **“Some people use their positions to repeatedly testify about themselves, aggrandize themselves, and compete with God for people and status. They use various methods and measures to make people worship them, constantly trying to win people over and control them. Some even intentionally mislead people into thinking that they are God so that they can be treated like God. They would never tell someone that they have been corrupted—that they too are corrupt and arrogant, not to worship them, and that no matter how well they do, it is all due to God’s exaltation and that they are doing what they ought to, anyway. Why do they not say these things? Because they are deeply afraid of losing their place in people’s hearts. This is why such people never exalt God and never bear witness to God”** (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God’s Work, God’s Disposition, and God Himself I). After reading God’s words, I felt very distressed. Only after reflecting upon myself did I see that while on the outside I had given the appearance of having suffered and paid a price, and fellowshiped to my brothers and sisters about God’s words so as to resolve their problems, I had actually just been doing it to make myself stand out and to show off so that others would think highly of me and adore me. Thinking back to when my co-workers had recommended me to be a leader at a church with new members, I realized that all I’d thought about was how I could rack up some achievements that would make my brothers and sisters think highly of me and my leader have a high opinion of me. To this end, I’d worked overtime, staying up all night to find relevant passages of God’s words and organizing what we would fellowship on in gatherings. When my brothers and sisters had encountered difficulties while spreading

the gospel, I had not fellowshiped to them about God's will to lead them into the principles of the truth, but instead had bragged and shown off about how much I'd suffered and what prices I'd paid while spreading the gospel. As my work had improved, my brothers and sisters had praised me. I had enjoyed this, and had taken personal credit for the results achieved by the Holy Spirit's work, shamelessly flaunting them as my own accomplishments. While fellowshiping at gatherings, I had frequently put myself in the limelight, only fellowshiping positive practices while avoiding any mention of the corrupt dispositions I'd revealed. If the subject ever did come up, I just glossed right over it. As for my own ignoble motives for fulfilling my duty, I was even more reluctant to dissect them or bring them to light. Time after time, God had used my brothers and sisters to mention my problems, but in order to protect my position and image, I had only verbally said that I accepted their points, when I had not actually reflected upon myself in the least. During fellowship I'd just continued to talk high-soundingly to deceive my brothers and sisters. In this way, I'd come to believe that I was responsible in my duty and could endure hardship and pay the price. Whatever problem or difficulty the church had, or whatever state my brothers and sisters found themselves in, I would not shrink back, but would always help them to find solutions. Exposed by the facts, I saw that when doing my duty, I'd not been practicing the truth at all, nor had I been considerate of God's will. I had taken advantage of the opportunity provided by fulfilling my duty to show off so that others would think highly of me, thus satisfying my desire for fame and position. In doing this, I hadn't brought my brothers and sisters before God; instead, I'd gotten them to worship me. This meant I'd been contending with God for people and position. Only then did I become conscious of the fact that I had already set foot upon the path of resisting God and committed a serious

transgression. I was scared and felt really guilty. Then I asked myself: How have I, without knowing it, gotten onto the path of resisting God?

Later, I read a passage of God's words: **"Since mankind was corrupted by Satan, their nature began to change and they gradually lost the sense of reason possessed by normal people. They now no longer act as human beings in the position of man; rather, they wish to surpass the status of man, and they yearn for something higher and greater. And what is this higher something? They wish to surpass God, to surpass the heavens, and to surpass all else. What is at the root of why people have become like this? When all is said and done, man's nature is overly arrogant. ... Once people have grown arrogant in nature and essence, they become capable of doing things that disobey and resist God, things that do not heed His words, things that generate notions about Him, things that rebel against Him, and things that exalt and bear testimony to themselves. You say you are not arrogant, but suppose you were given a number of churches and allowed to lead them; suppose that I did not deal with you, and that no one in God's family pruned you: After leading them a while, you would bring them to your feet and make them submit before you. And why would you do that? This would be determined by your nature; it would be none other than a natural revelation. You do not need to go out of your way to learn this, nor do you have to specially get others to teach it to you. You do not need to do any of this deliberately; this kind of situation comes about naturally to you: You make people submit before you, worship you, exalt you, testify about you, and listen to you in all things, and you do not allow them to go beyond your jurisdiction. Under your leadership, such situations occur naturally. And how do these situations come about? They are determined by man's arrogant nature"** (The Word,

Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. An Arrogant Nature Is the Root of Man's Resistance to God). Reading God's words made me understand why I'd wanted to satisfy God in my duty but had unintentionally set foot upon the path of resisting Him. The source of this had been the arrogant satanic nature inside of me. Under the control of my arrogant nature, I'd had a very high opinion of myself, and had often tried to show off both in speech and action so that others would think highly of me and adore me. When my brothers and sisters had encountered problems while fulfilling their duties, I had not fellowshiped on the principles of the truth to get them to understand the truth and have a path to practice, but had just spoken superficial words and doctrines to make myself look good, and had even used my own experiences of suffering and working as capital with which to show off. This had led my brothers and sisters to look up to me and to believe I understood the truth and could resolve their problems. Whenever they encountered any difficulties, they always came to me, unaware that they should be relying on God and seeking the truth to resolve their problems. They did not have a place for God in their hearts. It even got to where after I was transferred away, some brothers and sisters had not wanted to attend gatherings anymore. How could that be called fulfilling my duty? I was just committing evil and resisting God! That I was capable of such evil was all down to my arrogance and conceit. All I'd wanted was to lord it over people while protecting my status and image, getting all my brothers and sisters to adore me and put me at the center. I was so covetous of the blessing of my status. I could see that deep down, I had not had a shred of reverence for God. When people live by an arrogant nature, resisting God happens involuntarily. It really is so dangerous. I thought of the pastors and elders in the religious world. They do not exalt God or bear testimony for Him, nor do they lead believers to put the Lord's words into practice.

Instead, they blindly expound biblical knowledge and theological theory to deceive believers, and show off about how much they have suffered, how many people they have converted, and how many churches they have established. This causes the believers to worship them, look up to them, and do whatever they say. Some have read Almighty God's words and heard God's voice, but even so, they go ask the pastors and elders and check it with them. Without the pastors' consent, they don't dare accept Almighty God's work even though they know it's the true way. The pastors and elders of the religious world have people firmly under their control. They walk the God-resisting path of the antichrist, and are trying to create an independent kingdom! I often tried to show off in my duty so that people would think highly of me and look up to me. How was I any different from those pastors and elders? I thought about those brothers and sisters in that church with new members: They had just accepted God's work of the last days, and there were still a lot of truths they had not come to understand. God had raised me up to fulfill the duty of leading the church, so I should have fellowshiped to them more on God's words and borne more testimony to His work so that they would understand the truth and gain knowledge of God, and lay foundations on the true way. But what did I do? What came of my attempts to fulfill that duty? I made everyone worship me, and kept them from having any knowledge of God. In doing this, I had harmed my brothers and sisters, and interrupted and disturbed the church's work. The path I was walking was none other than the God-resisting path of the antichrist! The more I thought about it, the more worried and unsettled I felt. I could see just how arrogant I had been, how totally lacking in reverence for God, and my actions had been offending His disposition for a very long time. Had He not used my brothers and sisters to prune and deal with me like that, I would not have known to reflect upon my actions. If I

had continued along that path, there's no telling how much evil I would have done to incur God's curses and punishment. Feeling a lingering fear, I prostrated myself before God and prayed. I said, "God! I have been so arrogant. I always show off in my duty, and this has led my brothers and sisters to adore me and not have a place for You in their hearts. I have done evil and resisted You. I deserve Your punishment. God! I wish to repent before You, to pursue the truth in earnest, and to make a fresh start."

Afterward, I read these words of God: **"As one of the creatures, man must keep his own position, and behave conscientiously. Dutifully guard that which is entrusted to you by the Creator. Do not act out of line, or do things beyond your range of ability or which are loathsome to God. Do not try to be great, or become a superman, or above others, nor seek to become God. This is how people should not desire to be. Seeking to become great or a superman is absurd. Seeking to become God is even more disgraceful; it is disgusting, and despicable. What is commendable, and what the creatures should hold to more than anything else, is to become a true creature; this is the only goal that all people should pursue"** (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique I). **"No matter what it is that humans seek or what they desire, only those who return before the Creator and dutifully fulfill and complete what they are supposed to do, and what has been entrusted to them, will live with an easy conscience and in a way that is right and proper, without any suffering. This is the meaning and the value of living"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only by Performing the Duty of a Created Being Well Does One's Life Have Value). After reading God's words, I understood that He is the Lord of creation, and it is only right and proper—only natural—that humans should worship Him and submit to Him. Furthermore, I knew that I was just a tiny created being, a corrupt human. I was full of satanic

dispositions—I was arrogant, deceitful, and evil. Even so, I was always trying to show off and take my place in people’s hearts. I truly knew no shame and was arrogant beyond all reason! The more I thought about it, the more ashamed I felt. I hated myself for being blind and not knowing God. I didn’t know who I was. That I could be here today to fulfill my duty was thanks to the grace and elevation from God. I should take my proper place as a created being, and be an honest, upright person who focuses on pursuing the truth, exalting God and bearing testimony for Him, and fulfilling duties well—for only then would I have the conscience and sense a created being should have.

Later on, I sought a path to practice and entry through God’s words. I read some words of God that said, **“When bearing testimony for God, you should mainly talk more about how God judges and chastises people, what trials He uses to refine people and change their dispositions. You should also talk about how much corruption has been revealed in your experience, how much you have endured and how you were eventually conquered by God; talk about how much real knowledge of God’s work you have, and how you should bear witness for God and repay Him for His love. You should put substance into this kind of language, while putting it in a simple manner. Do not talk about empty theories. Speak more down-to-earth; speak from the heart. This is how you should experience. Do not equip yourselves with profound-seeming, empty theories in an effort to show off; doing so makes you appear quite arrogant and senseless. You should speak more of real things from your actual experience that are genuine and from the heart; this is most beneficial to others, and most appropriate for them to see”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only by Pursuing the Truth Can One Achieve a Change in Disposition). After reading God’s words, I understood a

little about how I should practice exalting God and bearing testimony for Him in my duty. In bearing testimony for God, I should speak more on how I had experienced His work, which corrupt dispositions had been revealed in me, how I had rebelled against and resisted Him, how I had reflected upon and come to know myself by comparing myself with His words, and how I had repented and changed. Through fellowshiping on the truth, I should help people understand God's will and His demands, help them to understand the work He does to save people, as well as His disposition, and be able to revere and submit to God and fulfill the duties of created beings. Only by doing this could I truly exalt God and bear testimony for Him. I thought about when I used to fellowship with my brothers and sisters. Most of the time I just talked about how much I had suffered and what price I had paid, and how I had witnessed God's deeds and been granted God's blessings. When it came to which corrupt dispositions had been revealed in me or what sort of ignoble motives I'd had, I always covered them up and rarely even mentioned them. I was terrified that if my brothers and sisters saw my corruption, their opinion of me would plummet. I really did have such a deceitful nature. After recognizing these things, I sought out Brother Zhang and opened up to him about my evil deeds of showing myself off to deceive people. I also asked Brother Zhang to go to the church at which I had previously served and dissect my behavior with the brothers and sisters there, thus allowing everyone to be more discerning. During the gathering, I also opened up to my brothers and sisters about my evil behavior, bore testimony to God's righteous disposition, and told everyone to use me as an example to learn what not to do so they would not walk the path of resisting God the way I had.

In my duty after that, I consciously exalted and testified to God and fellowshiped on His will, His requirements and His love for man. I exposed

my own corruption, my ugliness, and the motives behind my actions. I opened up and fellowshiped on how God's words guided me to know myself and practice the truth. In this way, my brothers and sisters would know I was corrupted, too. When resolving others' problems, sometimes I still wanted to brag about my past achievements, but I'd immediately pray to God and forsake myself. I'd seek the truth with them and fellowship on the principles of practice. This kind of practice gave me such a sense of peace in my heart. Acting in accordance with God's words felt wonderful. Being able to change and get back on the right track was all thanks to being judged, chastised, and pruned and dealt with by God. Thanks be to Almighty God!

70. A Show-off No More

By Mo Wen, Spain

I remember back in 2018 I was on gospel duty in the church, and later I was put in charge of that work. I was able to see the issues and mistakes in my brothers' and sisters' duties and could resolve them through fellowship, so everyone was happy with me, and I had a sense of accomplishment. I began feeling very pleased with myself and that I was better than everyone else. I couldn't help but show off. I thought, "I make suggestions and resolve people's problems, and everyone has a good impression of me. If I help them even more, I'll make myself look even more capable than them. Then they'll think even more highly of me." At a gathering one day, Brother Lu said he'd come across a religious co-worker while spreading the gospel. The guy had been a preacher for over 20 years, and was a true believer, but he had strong religious notions. Brother Lu gave him fellowship, but he wouldn't accept the gospel and Brother Lu didn't know what to do now. I thought to myself, "This guy is a true believer and wants to hear fellowship. You failed to convert him because you didn't fellowship on the truth clearly enough. I've experienced this kind of thing before, so this is my chance to tell you all about it." I said to them, "I don't see the difficulty here. You have to focus on the main points and fellowship clearly. If he's willing to listen and you resolve his issues, how could he not accept it? Co-worker Zhang used to have lots of notions so I refuted his strongest notion through fellowship and then moved on to the next one. He accepted the gospel in the end. You have to fellowship clearly when testifying to God's work." Then I told them about all the problems people I'd preached to had, how I fellowshipped to resolve them, and how they had accepted the gospel. I recounted these experiences in great detail, making sure to include

everything, so they would all see how capable I was. Afterward, everyone praised me and a sister said, “You really hit the nail on the head. Why couldn’t I see this?” I said that it was all down to God’s guidance, but inside I felt delighted. Sometimes when we were discussing work, I’d be considering what to say to make everyone think I was considering and analyzing every detail, that I had caliber, was intelligent, and better than others. When it was my turn to weigh in, I would go on and on and the word “I” was always on my lips. “I think this” and “I solved that.” “I, I, I...” I’d list my theories and ideas and analyze them all in detail. As time went on, the others began to depend on me, so they didn’t know to seek principles when problems arose. When discussing work, sometimes they’d ask me to speak first, before adding some things themselves. Sometimes a thought would flash through my mind: “If I carry on like this, will people end up idolizing me?” But then I’d think, “I’m not forcing anyone to listen to me. I’m just stating my views. Anyway, being proactive is a positive and responsible approach.” I didn’t give it much more thought, and just carried on.

We later ran into a lot of difficulties in spreading the gospel and brothers and sisters got quite disheartened. I felt the same way, too. I wanted to open up with everyone about how I felt, but I was the one in charge, so if I became negative so easily, wouldn’t I appear weak? What would the others think of me if they knew my stature was so small? Wouldn’t their good impression of me be destroyed? I wondered, “If I talk about positive entry and lead everyone in a positive way, won’t that get everyone motivated?” So in every fellowship I focused on how I faced the problems I encountered with positivity, how I relied on God through adversity and how I rose to meet the challenge. Everyone thought I had stature and could handle things. They all admired me. Sometimes when

discussing work with others, I'd reveal that I was under pressure in my duty, that I was so busy I barely had time to eat or rest so that they'd know how much I suffered. In gatherings, I didn't ponder God's words or reflect on myself, but thought only about how to make everyone think my fellowships were profound and weighty. Without realizing it, I'd preach some lofty doctrines and I really reveled in seeing the others' looks of approval. Over time, some people started to ask me first whenever they had a problem in their duty. Even when they could have resolved it themselves with a little thought, they still sought my opinion first. They'd tell me about their states and their innermost thoughts, and I was very pleased to know they trusted me. As time went on, I appeared to be very busy but I couldn't feel any enlightenment from the Holy Spirit when reading God's words. When discussing work with the others, all my suggestions were worthless and I couldn't see even the most obvious problems in our work. I finally realized that I was in a terrible state. My arrogance was all gone. I used to think I was the bee's knees, but I suddenly felt like a total moron without anything to show off about. There was a lot of darkness and pain in my spirit.

One day I was talking with two brothers when Brother Su said, "I've known you for a while now and you're always exalting yourself and showing off. You hardly mention your corruptions or faults in fellowship but mostly talk up your good points, which led me to think you're great and look up to you. When there's problems in my work, you don't fellowship on the principles of the truth, but just talk about what you've done and how you've resolved problems, so I think you're amazing and better than the rest of us. ..." I was totally unwilling to accept this from Brother Su, especially when he said that I was always exalting myself and showing off. These words echoed around in my head. Although I didn't argue, I felt very

resistant to what he'd said. "I never asked you to idolize me. Am I really as bad as you say?" I thought. I just couldn't accept it, so I asked the other brother what he thought. To my surprise, he said, "You never talk about your corruption or faults. I just don't get you anymore." This made me feel even worse. "How can he say he doesn't get me anymore? Am I so inscrutable?" I really wanted to say something to claw back some dignity, but seeing the two of them prune and deal with me like that, I knew there must be a reason. If what they'd said was true, then I really had a problem!

I wasted no time finding some of God's words exposing people who exalt and testify to themselves. I read this: **"Exalting and testifying to themselves, flaunting themselves, trying to make people think highly of them—corrupt mankind is capable of these things. This is how people instinctively react when they are governed by their satanic natures, and it is common to all of corrupt mankind. How do people usually exalt and testify to themselves? How do they achieve this aim? One way is to testify to how much they have suffered, how much work they have done, and how much they have expended themselves. That is, they use these things as the currency by which they exalt themselves, which gives them a higher, firmer, more secure place in people's minds, so that more people esteem, admire, respect, and even venerate, idolize, and follow them. That is the ultimate effect. Are the things they do to achieve this aim—all their exalting and testifying to themselves—reasonable? They are not. They are beyond the purview of rationality. These people have no shame: They unabashedly testify to what they have done for God and how much they have suffered for Him. They even flaunt their gifts, talents, experience, and special skills, or their clever techniques for conducting themselves and the means they use to toy with people. Their method of exalting and testifying to themselves is**

to flaunt themselves and belittle others. They also dissemble and camouflage themselves, hiding their weaknesses, shortcomings, and failings from people so that they only ever see their brilliance. They do not even dare to tell other people when they feel negative; they lack the courage to open up and fellowship with them, and when they do something wrong, they do their utmost to conceal it and cover it up. Never do they mention the harm they have caused to the house of God in the course of doing their duty. When they have made some minor contribution or achieved some small success, however, they are quick to show it off. They cannot wait to let the whole world know how capable they are, how high their caliber is, how exceptional they are, and how much better they are than normal people. Is this not a way of exalting and testifying to themselves? Is exalting and testifying to yourself within the rational bounds of normal humanity? It is not. So when people do this, what disposition is usually revealed? Arrogance is one of the chief manifestations, followed by deceitfulness, which involves doing everything possible to make other people hold them in high esteem. Their stories are completely watertight; their words clearly contain motivations and schemes, and they have found a way to hide the fact that they are showing off, but the outcome of what they say is that people are still made to feel that they are better than others, that no one is their equal, that everyone else is inferior to them. And is this outcome not achieved via underhanded means? What disposition is at the heart of such means? And are there any elements of wickedness? This is a kind of wicked disposition. It can be seen that these means they employ are directed by a deceitful disposition—so why do I say it is wicked? What connection does this have to wickedness? What do you think: Can they be open about their aims in exalting and testifying to

themselves? (No.) There is always a desire in the depths of their hearts, and what they say and do is in aid of that desire, and so the aims and motivations in the depths of their hearts of what they say and do are kept very secret. They will, for example, employ misdirection or some shady tactics to achieve these aims. Is such secretiveness not sly in nature? And can such slyness not be called wicked? It can indeed be called wicked, and it runs deeper than deceitfulness” (The Word, Vol. 3. The

Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. For Leaders and Workers, Choosing a Path Is of Utmost Importance (2)). I thought about how I’d been behaving in my duty: When brothers and sisters had problems, I acted like I was fellowshiping and helping them, talking up how I resolved problems in order to flaunt my prowess in work and make everyone think I was more capable than them. When discussing work, the first word out of my mouth was “I,” to put myself on display, making people think I knew it all so they’d idolize me. I hid my negativity and corruption from the others. I never discussed my own difficulties, much less dissected my corrupt dispositions. Instead, I talked up positive entry to hide my faults, to make others think I had stature and look up to me. I was always talking about how I suffered in my duty and how hard it was so they’d see how devoted I was to my duty. And in gatherings it was clear I had no understanding of God’s words or myself, but I just talked on and on, weaving the fiction that I knew myself so that others would think ever more highly of me. To keep enjoying their esteem and adoration, I went on saying and doing things that seemed right when really I was flaunting myself and showing off, causing others’ hearts to grow apart from God. Wasn’t my behavior caused by the evil disposition revealed in God’s words? Whatever I did or however I appeared to expend myself, my goal was never to do my duty well. I did all I could to consolidate my position, getting the others to idolize me. I was walking the

path of the antichrists. I finally realized my own danger so I hurriedly prayed to God, wishing to repent.

These words of God suddenly came to mind: **“If one is to live out normal humanity, how should they open themselves up and lay themselves bare? This is done by opening oneself up and clearly showing others the true feelings at the bottom of one’s heart, by being able to practice the truth, simply and purely. If one reveals their corruption, they must be able to know the essence of the problem and to hate and detest themselves from the bottom of their heart. When they lay themselves bare, they will not attempt to justify their behaviors, nor will they try to defend them. ... Firstly, one must understand their problems at an essential level, dissect themselves, and lay themselves bare. They must have an honest heart and a sincere attitude, and speak of what they can understand of the problems in their disposition. Secondly, should one feel that their disposition is particularly severe, they must say to all, ‘If I reveal such a corrupt disposition again, rise up, all of you—deal with me, and point it out to me. Don’t pull your punches. I may not be able to bear it at the time, but don’t pay that any mind. Work together to keep an eye on me. If this corrupt disposition flares up seriously, rise up, everyone, to expose me and deal with me. I hope sincerely that everyone will keep an eye on me, help me, and keep me from going astray.’ Such is the attitude with which one practices the truth”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. On Harmonious Coordination). God’s words showed me my direction. However much I understood my problems, I knew I couldn’t go on like that. I had to be honest and lay myself bare to show everyone the motives behind my actions so they could see that I was exalting myself, showing off, and walking the antichrists’ path. This was most important.

In the next gathering, I came totally clean there in front of the brothers and sisters and asked for their help and advice. After being completely open, I felt so much more at ease. The others spent the next few days sending me messages pointing out my issues, saying, “You always show off in your duty. I didn’t want to seek principles in my duty anymore, but just depended on you. I thought you knew it all and it was easier to ask you.” Some of them said, “I haven’t learned anything about God recently, but have just learned to idolize you more, thinking you’re both capable in work and responsible in your duty. I really looked up to you.” Hearing all this was really upsetting for me. I just couldn’t believe that this was what had come of doing my duty all these months. I felt very distressed and unhappy, thinking that God must surely hate me. I really sank low into negativity. But through constantly praying to God and with the others’ help and support, I finally realized that God wasn’t doing this to eliminate me but to cleanse and change me. If this hadn’t happened, I wouldn’t have seen I was on the wrong path. This was God’s great salvation for me! Once I’d understood God’s will, I resolved to reflect on myself and truly repent.

I read some of God’s words: **“Some people particularly idolize Paul. They like to go out and give speeches and do work, they like to attend gatherings and preach, and they like people listening to them, worshiping them, and revolving around them. They like to have status in the minds of others, and they appreciate it when others value the image they present. Let us analyze their nature from these behaviors: What is their nature? If they really behave like this, then it is enough to show that they are arrogant and conceited. They do not worship God at all; they seek a higher status and wish to have authority over others, to possess them, and to have status in their minds. This is the classic image of Satan. The aspects of their nature that stand out are**

arrogance and conceit, an unwillingness to worship God, and a desire to be worshiped by others. Such behaviors can give you a very clear view into their nature” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. How to Know Man’s Nature). **“For example, if arrogance and conceit existed within you, you would find it impossible to keep from defying God; you would feel compelled to defy Him. You would not do it on purpose; you would do it under the domination of your arrogant and conceited nature. Your arrogance and conceit would make you look down on God and see Him as being of no account; they would cause you to exalt yourself, constantly put yourself on display, and, finally, sit in God’s place and bear testimony for yourself. In the end, you would turn your own ideas, your own thinking, and your own notions into truths to be worshiped. See how much evil is done by people under the dominance of their arrogant and conceited nature!”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only by Pursuing the Truth Can One Achieve a Change in Disposition). The revelations in God’s words showed me that it was my arrogant nature that had driven me to seek elevated status in others’ hearts and that I was resisting God. Controlled by this arrogant nature, I began to feel pleased with myself when I saw results in my duty and I exalted myself and showed off however I could. I spoke and acted only to stand out, to display my gifts and abilities. I shamelessly flaunted how I suffered for my duty, how exhausting it was, how I resolved problems, all to make others think I was better than them, that I was extraordinary. I just had to have people look up to me and adore me. Wasn’t this an antichrist’s disposition? Paul was just the same. He was constantly displaying his knowledge and gifts through his preaching and work, showing off to make others admire him. He was always writing letters to the churches showing off about how much he’d worked and suffered for the Lord in order to win over people’s hearts. He

worked and toiled not to do his duty well or testify to the incarnate Christ, but to fulfill his own ambitions and desires. No matter how much he worked or suffered, or how many people idolized him, since he didn't pursue the truth and his head just kept getting bigger, in the end he brazenly testified that he himself was Christ. This seriously offended God's disposition and God punished him for it. I had just the same nature as Paul. I was so arrogant and conceited, in love with status, always exalting myself and showing off so that everyone would idolize me, there would be no place for God in their hearts and they wouldn't rely on God or seek the truth when problems arose. Doing my duty this way was resisting God and harming my brothers and sisters. I never thought such evil and resistance to God could come from living by my arrogant nature. If I didn't repent, sooner or later I would arouse God's wrath and be punished. Without God's discipline and the help and support of brothers and sisters, I wouldn't have reflected on myself. It was God's righteous disposition and great salvation that led to me being exposed like that.

Thinking about it, when I achieved things in my duty and discovered problems, it all came from God's enlightenment and guidance. Without the Holy Spirit's work, I was a fool who couldn't understand anything. I had no reality of the truth at all, yet I was so arrogant and haughty, shamelessly vying for God's position. I was so senseless! I didn't fellowship the truth or testify to God in my duty, but just showed off and misled people—what an evil thing to do! I really began to hate myself then. I didn't want to carry on that way, so I said a prayer to God: “Dear God, I've been so wrong! I see how arrogant and senseless I am. Thank You for giving me the chance to repent. I'll practice the truth in earnest from now on and get on the right path. Please guide me.”

I then read this in God's words: **“What should one do in order to not exalt and testify to oneself? In regard to the same matter, there is making a spectacle of yourself to achieve the aim of exalting and testifying to yourself and inspiring veneration in others, as opposed to opening up and laying bare your true self—these are different in essence. Are these not details? For example, to open up and lay bare your motives and thoughts, what are the turns of phrase, the expressions that display self-knowledge? What kind of display that results in others’ adulation constitutes exalting and bearing witness to oneself? Recounting how you have prayed and sought the truth and stood witness through trials is exalting and bearing witness to God. This kind of practice is not exalting and bearing witness to yourself. Exposing oneself involves motivation: If someone’s motivation is to show everyone their corruption rather than to exalt themselves, then their words will be earnest, true, and based on fact; if their motivation is to get others to venerate them, to hoodwink others and hide their true face from them, to stop their motives, corruption or weaknesses and negativity from being revealed before others, their manner of speaking is deceitful and misleading. Is there not a concrete difference here?”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. For Leaders and Workers, Choosing a Path Is of Utmost Importance (2)). **“When bearing testimony for God, you should mainly talk more about how God judges and chastises people, what trials He uses to refine people and change their dispositions. You should also talk about how much corruption has been revealed in your experience, how much you have endured and how you were eventually conquered by God; talk about how much real knowledge of God’s work you have, and how you should bear witness for God and repay Him for His love. You should put substance into this**

kind of language, while putting it in a simple manner. Do not talk about empty theories. Speak more down-to-earth; speak from the heart. This is how you should experience. Do not equip yourselves with profound-seeming, empty theories in an effort to show off; doing so makes you appear quite arrogant and senseless. You should speak more of real things from your actual experience that are genuine and from the heart; this is most beneficial to others, and most appropriate for them to see” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only by Pursuing the Truth Can One Achieve a Change in Disposition). God’s words showed me that I had to focus on reflecting on and knowing myself through experiences to fix my problem of exalting myself and showing off. I had to get my motives right when giving fellowships and talk more about the corruptions I expressed, dissect my motives and impurities, talk about how I experienced being judged by God’s words, what I truly understood about myself, what I understood about God’s disposition and His love, and use my actual experiences to exalt and testify to God. That’s truly doing my duty. In the next gathering, I purposely dissected how I’d schemed and showed off for the sake of status, and how God arranged a situation to deal with me and make me see my ugliness. A brother then said to me, “Your experience has shown me that although we have corrupt dispositions, we just need to accept being judged and dealt with by God’s words, practice the truth and forsake our flesh, and we will be transformed. I also see that everything God does is to save man.” I was filled with gratitude toward God when I heard this. Gaining this understanding of myself was all down to being judged and chastised by God’s words.

I began to consciously enter into this in my duty after that. When I discovered mistakes in others’ duties, I’d pray to God, set my motives straight and express my views objectively. I didn’t boast like before. I’d

also find some principles of the truth to share with brothers and sisters. In gatherings, I'd dissect the motives and taints in my actions and the corrupt dispositions I revealed so that the others would know the real me. By practicing in this way, I felt such a sense of peace in my heart and my relationship with God normalized. Some time later, I felt that the others were treating me in the right way and didn't look up to me like they had before. When I spoke or acted at odds with the principles of the truth, they pointed it out so I could set things straight. Interacting with the others this way was really liberating. I truly thank God for arranging this situation to cleanse and change me!

71. The Harm Done by Showing Off

By Ruoyu, Spain

A few years ago, I was on watering duty with some brothers and sisters of a similar age. They were so enthusiastic and responsible. They were often praised by others, which made me admire them a lot. I hoped to one day be like them and be looked up to by others. Later, I was transferred to another church. It wasn't long before a leader there was designated a false leader and replaced for not doing practical work and I was elected to be church leader in their place. The brothers and sisters who knew me encouraged me, saying, "God is raising you up, you'd best cherish it." I knew this duty would be a big responsibility and I felt this would be a great chance to prove myself. If I did well, I'd be looked up to by the brothers and sisters. I silently made a resolution to do my absolute best to do this duty well.

In every group gathering after that, I dissected how the previous leader had not done practical work and often spoke negatively, and everyone felt really angry with them. Seeing this, I often had to remind myself that brothers and sisters were now able to discern false leaders and were expecting me to do practical work. I had to work hard and strive to win their approval. As a church leader, I had to be the most proactive in the church and be willing to suffer more than anyone else, and be able to make more sacrifices than anyone, too. I had to have more faith than the others when trials came along and not become negative when they did. I had to be better than the others in the church in every respect so that everyone would be constantly singing my praises. Dominated by such thoughts, I busied myself with all the group gatherings and went to bed late every day. Sometimes, when chatting with the others, I would deliberately let slip how

busy I was with church work and how late I went to bed. When they heard this, they'd think I was so responsible and so willing to suffer and were always telling me to look after myself. They would also gift me with delicacies and drinks from their homes. Whenever one of them was in a bad state, I'd rush over to support them, no matter the weather. In gatherings, I told the brothers and sisters about so-and-so who felt negative for a long time, but who became positive again when I fellowshiped with them. Everyone then thought I was so loving and patient, despite my young age. To get a handle on church work, the moment a potential convert appeared, I'd hurry to ask the gospel deacon to go fellowship with them and sometimes I'd even go myself to share testimony with them. Later, the gospel work began to make headway and in a gathering, I told the others: "See? Our gospel work wasn't great before, but now we have people accepting God's work every month. We have to make even more effort." The brothers and sisters then felt that gospel work had been taken in hand since I arrived, and they looked up to me and idolized me even more. When I fellowshiped my experiences in gatherings, I'd hugely emphasize some instances of positive entry. I was afraid that if I spoke too much about my corruption, then the others would think I was frail when issues arose and that I was of small stature, and not look up to me anymore. So I tended to say very little about how I was negative or weak or how I revealed corruption. As for how I sought the truth, practiced God's words and how I did my duty with faith and saw God's guidance, I talked it all up, making sure I recounted every tiny detail. Because I fellowshiped like this for a long time, the others thought I was great at pursuing the truth and that I could always find the path of practice. They'd seek me out for fellowship when they had difficulties.

After a while, all aspects of the church's work began to make headway. People's faith grew, and more and more people wanted to do their duty. Seeing this success, I felt even more like I was the pillar of the church. I held myself straight and spoke more boldly wherever I went. I thought I was doing great at being a church leader, and that my position was well-deserved. When working with others, I always took the lead. I showed off like I was better than them so that they'd admire me and do what I said. One time, we had to rent a house to gather in. A deacon and a brother who was my work partner went to check out the house. I thought: "I should have the say on such an important matter. You can't approve it without me even having seen it myself." Actually, I knew in my heart that this brother was older and more experienced than me and that he'd know better than me whether the house was right or not. But I racked my brains about how I could show how clever I was, thinking: "What other details and issues should we consider when renting a house?" So I raised some questions and made them go make more enquiries. In the end, some issues were found with that house and when my co-workers found out, they said, "We're so ashamed. We're older than you, but we didn't consider things as carefully as you did." I felt so pleased with myself when I heard this. From then on, everyone came to me to seek answers and discuss things. As time went on, those I worked with became a little passive, waiting for me to give my opinion on everything. They began to rely on me more and more.

Gradually I found that my prestige among the co-workers was becoming more established and that I had to have a say in all church matters, big or small. Brothers and sisters looked to me to give them fellowship on every difficulty. I felt myself to be indispensable to the church and I often felt very self-satisfied. Sometimes I'd think that misfortune will come to those who are looked up to, and I'd feel uneasy and

ask myself: “Everyone looks up to me so much—have I gone astray?” But then I’d think: “I’m a leader. The brothers and sisters are supposed to come to me with their issues. And there are some problems they have that I can help them resolve. It’s normal for them to rely on me! Who doesn’t like being with someone who helps them?” And so I ignored the Holy Spirit’s rebukes and warnings and didn’t examine my own state or the path I was on. Instead, I just carried on along the same old wrong path. Only when God chastened and disciplined me did my numb heart begin to be aware.

When I woke up one morning, I found that my left eye really hurt. It kept weeping and when I looked in the mirror, I found the whole left side of my face was stiff. I couldn’t close my eye or move my mouth. I had no idea what had happened. At the gathering that afternoon, a sister was shocked to see me and said this was facial paralysis and that I had to seek treatment right away. She said if I delayed, my face would never return to normal. This came as a real blow and my mind went totally blank. How could I have gotten such an illness so young? If what she said was true and my face would end up all skewed, how would I then do my duty? How would I face people? I felt totally dazed, and then I began to weaken in my heart. The others were all discussing my illness but in my head I was a total mess. I had no energy left at all.

My journey home that day was a blur. I wanted to pray to God but didn’t know what to say. All I could do was keep asking God to guide me to quiet my heart and seek His will. I suddenly thought of a hymn of God’s words: **“When the suffering of illness befalls you, how should you experience it? You should come before God to pray, seeking to fathom His will and examining what kinds of transgressions you have made or what corruptions you have not yet resolved. You cannot but suffer physically. Only by being tempered through suffering can people cease**

to be unbridled and always live before God. When people feel upset, they always pray, reflecting upon whether they have done anything wrong or how they may have offended God. This is beneficial for them. When people suffer great pain and trials, it certainly does not happen by chance” (Follow the Lamb and Sing New Songs, You Must Seek God’s Will When Sickness Strikes). God’s words say: **“When people suffer great pain and trials, it certainly does not happen by chance.”** God’s words made me realize that this illness was no accident. God’s good will was surely behind it, and He was disciplining me. I had to seek in earnest and reflect on myself to figure out how I’d offended God. I came before God in prayer: “Almighty God! I’m now sick and I know in my heart that this is You disciplining me, that You’re using this illness to warn me and make me reflect on myself. But I’m so numb right now. I haven’t figured out my problems. Please enlighten me so that I may learn my lesson through this illness.” After praying, I kept thinking about it but couldn’t figure out how I’d offended God. So I came before God again in earnest prayer and asked Him to guide me. I prayed and sought like this for a few days. Thanks be to God for hearing my prayers. Not long after, God arranged situations so I could see my problems.

One day, I went to Sister Zhao’s house for acupuncture. Her family all asked how I was, afraid that I might be feeling down. During the acupuncture, they read The Principles of How to Handle Disease. Sister Zhao told me not to worry, but to pray and rely on God more and to have faith, and that with treatment I’d be better in no time. But because she’d said before that without prompt treatment my face could become crooked forever, I was really afraid. But seeing her so worried about me, I thought: “If the others knew how I really feel, would they think I have small stature? Whenever anyone encounters a trial or gets sick, I fellowship with them on

truths related to faith, feeling so strong in faith myself. But now that I've gotten sick so suddenly, I'm showing my lack of faith and expressing worries and fears. Will everyone think I've just been preaching doctrine?" So I smiled and said to Sister Zhao, "I do actually feel a little weak now that I'm sick, but I believe that everything is in God's hands. This physical suffering is nothing. What pains me most is that I can't find God's will or figure out what my problems are. It upsets me to be so numb." She looked at me admiringly and said, "You should reflect on yourself now that you're sick. Examine and try to understand yourself, and also go for treatment. You could've gotten sick because you always work so hard. You do your duty from dawn till dusk, and we all respect that. You still want to go do your duty even now. Just take it easy. I reprimanded the sister you work with for not pulling her weight. I've reminded her to be more attentive with church work." I felt a little uneasy when she said this, so I set her straight, saying, "I'm not the only one who attends to church work. Don't put me on a pedestal." I thought on my way home that day: "How could she criticize that sister like that because of me? Am I more responsible than everyone else in her eyes? I must always be praising myself and belittling others." I thought about how I'd just hidden my weakness from Sister Zhao and pretended to have such strong faith—hadn't I deceived her? I was wondering about this when I saw Sister Zhang coming toward me. She was all concern for me, and said, "You must take good care of yourself. What will we do if you're laid low by this condition?" Hearing her speak so frankly, I felt very afraid. As I went on my way, I kept thinking about what she'd said. I began to feel nervous inside, and thought: "I'm just an insignificant church leader. The church can get on fine without me. How could she ask what they would do without me? Her saying that shows that I've taken a place in her heart. The heart is God's temple, so if I have a

place there, aren't I resisting God?" I thought about how I always wanted people's approval and admiration, but when I heard the sister say that, I felt uneasy and afraid. I thought, "Have other brothers and sisters been deceived by me, too? If others feel the same way Sister Zhang does, doesn't that mean I've brought people before me? I am on the antichrists' path!" I thought about some antichrists I'd seen expelled before and felt a chill creep up my spine. I felt like I'd met some great calamity.

When I got home, I got my book of God's words and read this: **"People with an arrogant nature are capable of disobeying God, resisting Him, committing acts which pass judgment on Him and betray Him, and doing things that exalt themselves and that are an attempt to establish their own kingdom. If, for the sake of argument, twenty thousand people in a country were to accept and you were arranged to go there to work, and I neglected you for a month and handed you the authority to act by yourself, then before ten days had passed, you would have made yourself known to everyone; and within a month, they would all be kneeling down before you, singing your praises with every word, saying you preach insightfully, and persistently claiming that your utterances were what they needed and that you could provide for their requirements—all without ever voicing the word 'God.' How would you have done this work? For these people to be capable of such a reaction would prove that the work you were doing did not involve bearing testimony to God at all; rather, it only bore testimony to yourself and showed yourself off. How could you achieve such a result? Some people say, 'What I fellowship is the truth; I've certainly never testified to myself!' That attitude of yours—that manner—is one of trying to fellowship to people from God's position, and it is not one of standing in the position of a corrupt human.**

Everything you say is bombastic talk and making demands of others; it has nothing at all to do with yourself. Therefore, the effect you would achieve is to get people to worship you, envy you, and praise you until, in the end, they all have knowledge of you, testify to you, exalt you, and flatter you to high heaven. When that happens, you will be finished; you will have failed! Is this not the path you are all on right now? If you are asked to lead a few thousand or a few tens of thousands of people, you would feel elated. You would then give rise to arrogance and start trying to occupy God's position, speaking and gesticulating, and you would not know what to wear, what to eat, or how to walk. You would not meet most of those below you, and you would gradually degenerate, and be struck down just like the archangel. You are all capable of this, are you not? So, what should you do? If, one day, arrangements really were made for you to go out and do work, and you were capable of doing these things, then how could the work be expanded? Would this not be troublesome? Who, then, would dare to let you go out there? When you got out there, you would not come back; you would pay no attention to anything God said, and you would just keep on showing off and bearing testimony to yourself, as if you were bringing people salvation, doing God's work, and making people feel as though God had appeared and was here working—and as people worshiped you, you would be overjoyed, and you would even acquiesce if they treated you like God. Once you reached that stage, you would be done for; you would be scrapped. Without your realizing it, this kind of arrogant nature would end up being your ruin. This is an example of a person who walks the path of the antichrists. People who reach this point have lost consciousness; their perception has ceased to function”

(The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. An Arrogant Nature Is the Root of

Man's Resistance to God). **"Some people use their positions to repeatedly testify about themselves, aggrandize themselves, and compete with God for people and status. They use various methods and measures to make people worship them, constantly trying to win people over and control them. Some even intentionally mislead people into thinking that they are God so that they can be treated like God. They would never tell someone that they have been corrupted—that they too are corrupt and arrogant, not to worship them, and that no matter how well they do, it is all due to God's exaltation and that they are doing what they ought to, anyway. Why do they not say these things? Because they are deeply afraid of losing their place in people's hearts. This is why such people never exalt God and never bear witness to God"** (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God's Work, God's Disposition, and God Himself I). **"All of those who go downhill exalt themselves and bear testimony to themselves. They go around boasting about themselves and self-aggrandizing, and they have not taken God to heart at all. Do you have any experience of what I am talking about? Many people are constantly bearing testimony to themselves: 'I've suffered in this way and that; I've done this work and that; God has treated me in this way and that; He asked me to do such and such; He thinks especially highly of me; now I'm like this and that.' They deliberately speak in a certain tone and adopt certain postures. Ultimately, some people end up thinking that these people are God. Once they have gotten to that point, the Holy Spirit will long since have abandoned them. Although, for the meantime, they are ignored, and not expelled, their fate is set, and all they can do is to await their punishment"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. People Make Too Many Demands of God). God's words pierced my heart like a sword. I was just like what God's words said, always exalting myself and showing off in my

duty. Ever since I became a leader, I thought that to be a leader, I had to be better than others and with more stature to get everyone's approval and admiration. When I fellowshiped my experiences, I put on a pretense and hardly ever talked about my own weaknesses and corruption, afraid that the others wouldn't look up to me if they knew I was just as corrupt as them. Even when I got sick, I got negative and began to complain, and felt very frightened, but to maintain my image I hid my true feelings and only talked about positive things so the others would idolize me even more and think how positive I was, and how much more faith I had than other people. As a leader, I was supposed to stay up late and suffer more anyway. But I always intentionally let slip about how busy I was to the brothers and sisters, about how late I stayed up and how hard I worked so they'd think I was so responsible and hard-working. The success I saw in my duty was clearly down to the Holy Spirit, but I never exalted God, just showed off about how much I'd suffered and sacrificed so that everyone thought of me as the pillar of the church as though nothing could get done without me. I always fellowshiped like this, deceiving others, which led to me being disciplined with this illness. But the others believed I'd gotten sick because of how hard I'd worked, and they even reprimanded the sister I worked with for not pulling her weight as though I bore the greatest burden for the church. I'd exalted myself and showed off in this way, deceiving and caging others, and bringing them before me. I'd been being openly hostile to God. Thinking of this, I couldn't help but feel afraid. In order to get the others to look up to me and idolize me, I used all kinds of means to show myself off and deceive the others, which led them to rely on me until there was no room for God in their hearts. They sought my opinion and approval in everything—hadn't I been reigning like a queen in the church? The church was supposed to be a place to worship God. By exalting myself and bringing

others before me, hadn't I been trying to replace God and turn Him into a figurehead? I'd been resisting and betraying God just like an antichrist—I'd committed the terrible sin of offending God's disposition! I felt terrified just then. I'd gotten sick because I'd enraged God and He was now showing His righteous disposition. I hated myself for being so numb and rebellious and saw how God's righteous disposition tolerates no offense. I fell down before God to pray and repent: "Almighty God! For the last year, I've not been serving You, but doing evil. I've brought people before me, vying with You for control. I've acted like an antichrist, so despicably and shamefully. Dear God, I've really done wrong." Overcome with remorse, I felt too ashamed to face God.

I then began to think: "How could I get onto such a wrong path? What on earth has caused this to happen?" I read God's words: **"Some people particularly idolize Paul. They like to go out and give speeches and do work, they like to attend gatherings and preach, and they like people listening to them, worshiping them, and revolving around them. They like to have status in the minds of others, and they appreciate it when others value the image they present. Let us analyze their nature from these behaviors: What is their nature? If they really behave like this, then it is enough to show that they are arrogant and conceited. They do not worship God at all; they seek a higher status and wish to have authority over others, to possess them, and to have status in their minds. This is the classic image of Satan. The aspects of their nature that stand out are arrogance and conceit, an unwillingness to worship God, and a desire to be worshiped by others. Such behaviors can give you a very clear view into their nature"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. How to Know Man's Nature). **"Since mankind was corrupted by Satan, their nature began to change and they gradually lost the sense of**

reason possessed by normal people. They now no longer act as human beings in the position of man; rather, they wish to surpass the status of man, and they yearn for something higher and greater. And what is this higher something? They wish to surpass God, to surpass the heavens, and to surpass all else. What is at the root of why people have become like this? When all is said and done, man's nature is overly arrogant. ... The manifestation of arrogance is rebellion and resistance against God. When people are arrogant, self-important, and self-righteous, they tend to set up their own independent kingdoms and do things however they want. They also bring others into their own hands and draw them into their embraces. For people to be capable of doing such things, it means the essence of their arrogance has become that of the archangel. When their arrogance and self-importance reach a certain level, then that determines that they are the archangel and will put God aside. If you possess such an arrogant disposition, God will have no place in your heart" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. An Arrogant Nature Is the Root of Man's Resistance to God). God's words gave me a clearer understanding of the essence of my problem and I saw the reason why I always exalted myself and showed off in my duty. It was because of my arrogant, conceited nature. The path I was on had been wrong from the start. Exalting myself and showing off in my duty made me just like Paul. Paul always exalted and testified to himself while he did his work and never once in his letters did he testify that the Lord Jesus was God incarnate. He just testified about how much he suffered and sacrificed, even saying "For to me to live is Christ" (Philippians 1:21), and "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: From now on there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness" (2 Timothy 4:7-8). He made others believe that he deserved a crown and rewards. I saw that my nature was just like Paul's. I enjoyed

being looked up to and idolized, having people flock around me, and hearing people praise me wherever I went. I just had to have a place in people's hearts. Just as God's words said, I saw that my nature was filled with **"arrogance and conceit, an unwillingness to worship God, and a desire to be worshiped by others."** I was so arrogant that I was beyond all sense. I wasn't able to take my place as a created being and worship God and I didn't treat God as God, but instead honored myself. I set myself up in my duty to be looked up to and idolized, which led to me deceiving my brothers and sisters. When issues arose, they relied on me and had me make all work decisions. I brought people before me and established my own kingdom. How could such behavior not arouse God's wrath and make Him hate me? My sickness was God's righteousness and I deserved it for doing evil and resisting God. I thanked God for disciplining me, stopping my evildoing in its tracks.

Realizing this, I prayed to God: "From tomorrow, I will purposefully practice the truth and forsake my flesh. I will expose my corruption so that others may see my ugliness, see me for what I am, and no longer idolize me." During devotionals the next morning, I read some of God's words about being honest and open, and about how to exalt God and testify to Him. God's words say: **"When bearing testimony for God, you should mainly talk more about how God judges and chastises people, what trials He uses to refine people and change their dispositions. You should also talk about how much corruption has been revealed in your experience, how much you have endured and how you were eventually conquered by God; talk about how much real knowledge of God's work you have, and how you should bear witness for God and repay Him for His love. You should put substance into this kind of language, while putting it in a simple manner. Do not talk about empty theories. Speak**

more down-to-earth; speak from the heart. This is how you should experience. Do not equip yourselves with profound-seeming, empty theories in an effort to show off; doing so makes you appear quite arrogant and senseless. You should speak more of real things from your actual experience that are genuine and from the heart; this is most beneficial to others, and most appropriate for them to see. You used to be people who opposed God the most and were least inclined to submit to Him, but now you have been conquered—never forget that. You should ponder and think about these matters more. Once people have understood them clearly, they will know how to bear testimony; otherwise, they will be liable to commit shameful and senseless acts”

(The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only by Pursuing the Truth Can One Achieve a Change in Disposition). **“Sharing and communing experiences’ means**

giving voice to every thought in your heart, your state of being, your experiences and knowledge of God’s words, and the corrupt disposition within you, and then letting others discern them, accept the positive parts, and recognize that which is negative. Only this is sharing, and only this is truly communing” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last

Days. The Most Fundamental Practice of Being an Honest Person). I understood from God’s words that to truly exalt and testify to God, we have to talk more about our corruption and rebelliousness, lay bare our true state and thoughts, talk about our base motives, what we have done and what the outcome was, and about how we experience the judgment of God’s words and come to know ourselves. We should also expose and dissect our corrupt essence so that everyone can see us for what we are and talk about how God has chastened and disciplined us and arranged situations to guide us so that everyone can see His love for man. We also have to speak truly from our hearts and not boast or show off. Now that I had a path of practice, I opened up to the

others in fellowship about all the ways I'd been walking the antichrists' path lately. I dissected the scary consequences of how I'd walked this path and deceived people, and the more I fellowshiped on this, the more clearly I saw myself. Afterward, the others said they hadn't realized any of this and that they'd been fooled by my clever speech and good deeds. One sister said, "I used to think you were great at practicing the truth, as though you could always stay positive by reading God's words. Now I see that you are also so corrupt, that you've been negative and weak, too, and that corrupt mankind is all the same. We cannot idolize anyone or put anyone on a pedestal." Another sister said, "I used to think you were really strong and I never wanted to be open around you. I used to think I was so corrupt compared to you! Now that you've opened up to us today, I see that we're all the same." Hearing the sisters say this made me feel so ashamed and remorseful. I told them, "Don't look up to me anymore. I've been walking the antichrists' path and have misled you all." Then my work partners and co-workers used God's words to help me know myself, and I suddenly felt a lot closer to them all. I felt so much more at ease when I got home that day. That evening, I almost forgot about my illness and slept like a baby. I was delighted when I woke up the next day to find that my face was back to normal. It had gotten better in just one night!

In a gathering after that, I read this in God's words: **"Ordinarily, when it comes to those whose intentions and objectives are not right, as well as those who love to be seen by others, who are eager to do things, who are prone to causing disruptions, who are good at spouting religious doctrine, who are Satan's lackeys, and so on—when these people stand up, they become difficulties for the church, and this causes their brothers' and sisters' eating and drinking of God's words to come to nothing. When you encounter such people play-acting, ban them**

immediately. If, despite repeated admonitions, they do not change, then they will suffer loss. If those who stubbornly persist in their ways attempt to defend themselves and try to cover up their sins, the church should cut them out immediately and leave them no room to maneuver. Do not lose a lot by trying to save a little; keep your eye on the big picture” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 17). God’s words revealed my most obvious trait over the last year. Ever since I became a leader, I always enjoyed taking the lead in everything I did. I showed off like I was better than everyone. When discussing work with my work partners, although they had their own ideas, I always had to take the lead and spout off my “superior” opinions. I appeared to be proactive and positive, but in reality I just wanted to show off in everything I did and make people admire me. Thinking of this, I realized that my arrogant nature had caused me to act so shamefully. The others respected my opinions and discussed things with me. They were living out truth reality—they weren’t dictatorial or arrogant. But I took this to mean I was better than them, and always wanted to be condescending and show how much better I was. It was all so laughable. I felt like the emperor in The Emperor’s New Clothes, without any self-awareness. I didn’t know how shamefully I was behaving, but just showed off every chance I got. Thinking about my behavior, I felt mortified and embarrassed. I’d thought I was wonderful because I never really knew myself. I felt afraid thinking of the path I was on, especially when I read in God’s words that when we find people with wrong motives who love showing off, we should **“ban them immediately,”** and if they do not reflect on themselves but make excuses, **“the church should cut them out immediately.”** This showed God’s righteousness and majesty. I’d been showing off every chance I got and ended up deceiving my brothers and sisters and making

them idolize me even more. This led them to have no place for God in their hearts. I'd secretly turned those I worked with into figureheads and they no longer acted responsibly. Running rampant in the church, I'd caused only harm without realizing it at all, all the while thinking of myself as a rising star. If God hadn't judged me so sternly, I'd never have known anything about myself or about the wrong path I was on or that I was on the path of no return. Understanding this, my viewpoints on things began to change. I used to think that if I was a capable person who was looked up to by others, then a little bit of showing off was no big deal, even that it was glorious. Now I realized that showing off in such a despicable way to get people to look up to me was shameful. I felt how undignified it was to not understand myself, to not seek dispositional change, and to follow my arrogant disposition and show off every chance I got. Those with humanity are able to cast off their arrogance, revere God, conduct themselves properly, practically do their duty, and testify to God in both word and deed. People like this live sensible and dignified lives.

After that, I felt disgusted and repulsed whenever I showed off involuntarily. I'd then consciously remind myself that I had to be real and not brag, no matter who I was with. I especially had to be more practical in my fellowships and not show off. Before fellowshiping my experiences, I'd mindfully pray to God, asking Him to watch my heart and correct my motives so I would testify to Him more. After fellowship, I'd then ask myself whether I'd shown off in any way in what I'd just said. Sometimes I'd discover that I had shown off a little in what I'd said, so the next time I met with the same group, I'd lay myself bare and analyze my previous behavior so that they would all discern my words and not blindly idolize me. After fellowshiping like this, the brothers and sisters were able to see my true stature and not look up to me anymore.

Thinking back on all that happened, God gave me a chance to do my duty, but I walked the antichrists' path to do my own thing and became His enemy. I owe God so much. If He hadn't disciplined me with that sickness, without the judgment of His words, I still wouldn't have known myself at all. I always used to sing the hymn "Know That God's Chastisement and Judgment Are Love," but I never had any real experience or understanding about it. Now I truly came to feel that God's judgment, chastisement, chastening, and discipline are His greatest love and salvation! I was very moved as I pondered God's love and regretted that I hadn't pursued the truth. I told myself that I had to seek to be an honest person. In gatherings I focused on how to fellowship on God's words in a way that would testify to God. When with my co-workers, I made extra effort to respect and affirm their opinions which accorded with the truth and I stopped shutting them down and showing off like I had before. My work partners and I were on an equal footing, with no one taking the lead anymore. When issues arose, everyone sought the principles and put them into practice. I was so grateful to God's judgment and chastisement that led me to understand His righteous disposition and begin to revere Him. I sought to take my place as a created being while I served Him and to do my duty well. I thank Almighty God for saving me.

72. A Hypocrite's Repentance

By Xinrui, South Korea

Almighty God says, **“Serving God is no simple task. Those whose corrupt disposition remains unchanged can never serve God. If your disposition has not been judged and chastised by God’s words, then your disposition still represents Satan, which proves that you serve God out of your own good intentions, that your service is based on your satanic nature. You serve God with your natural character, and according to your personal preferences. What’s more, you always think that the things you are willing to do are what are delightful to God, and that the things you do not wish to do are what are hateful to God; you work entirely according to your own preferences. Can this be called serving God? Ultimately, there will not be the slightest change in your life disposition; instead, your service will make you even more stubborn, thus deeply ingraining your corrupt disposition, and as such, there will be formed within you rules about service to God that are primarily based on your own character, and experiences derived from your service according to your own disposition. These are the experiences and lessons of man. It is man’s philosophy of living in the world. People like this can be classed as Pharisees and religious officials. If they never wake up and repent, then they will surely turn into the false Christs and the antichrists who deceive people in the last days. The false Christs and the antichrists that were spoken of will arise from among such people”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Religious Service Must Be Purged). This passage of God’s words used to make me think of the hypocritical Pharisees and clergy and all those evil antichrists who are obsessed with status. I thought they were the ones God was talking

about. I knew in principle God was revealing something that's in all of us, and that I had that kind of corrupt disposition, too. But I didn't have a genuine understanding of myself, so sometimes the Pharisees, antichrists, and deceivers seemed like something really removed from me. I wasn't like that, and I'd never get to that point. I'd been a believer for years, I did good things, and I'd paid a price in my duty. No matter what duty the church assigned to me, I obeyed and carried it out. Plus I wasn't striving to become a leader, and I did my duty whether I had any status or not. How could I turn into an antichrist, a deceiver? But in fact, I was entirely living within my notions and imaginings, and later in the face of the facts, these notions of mine were turned on their head.

I left to take on responsibility for an out-of-town church's gospel work. That part of their work started to pick up before long and the leaders really valued me. Sometimes they'd seek me out to discuss other aspects of their work, to consult with me. On top of that, I was a long-time believer and could suffer hardship for my duty, so the brothers and sisters kind of looked up to me. I also saw myself as being on a pedestal. I'd had faith for all those years and I was in charge, so I thought I couldn't be like the others, that I had to appear better than them. I thought I couldn't reveal corruption any worse than what they revealed, that I couldn't show weakness or negativity like they did. Otherwise, what would they think of me? Wouldn't they say how small my stature still was after all my years of faith, and look down on me? Later on I was dealt with by a leader for violating principles in my duty. She said that I still lacked insight into things after so many years as a believer and I lacked the reality of the truth. I felt incredibly ashamed and disgraced, but I didn't reflect on my own corruption and shortcomings or pursue the truth to make up for my deficiencies. Instead I spouted a bunch

of empty words and doctrine, pretending to know myself, acting like a spiritual person to cover up that I lacked the reality of the truth.

I remember once, a co-worker who believed in the Lord said he wanted to investigate the true way. The leader told me to go right away to bear witness to God's work of the last days. I said I would, but I discovered that he had a lot of notions that were hard to resolve. I happened to be really busy at the time, so I shelved that task for the time. The leader asked me a couple of weeks later, "Why haven't you shared testimony with him after all this time? He wants to look into the true way and he leads so many believers, who are all longing for the Lord's return. Why haven't you given him testimony on God's work of the last days yet?" Feeling a bit guilty, I rushed to explain myself, saying, "I couldn't make it because other things came up." The leader was furious when she heard this, saying I was irresponsible and cavalier in my duty, that I dragged my feet, and I'd seriously hindered our gospel work. She rebuked me really harshly. Lots of brothers and sisters were there at the time and I could feel my face burning. I thought, "Couldn't you leave me a little dignity and not be so hard on me? I know I was wrong, can't I just go share the gospel with him now? There's no need to deal with me so severely." I was justifying it to myself, too, thinking that I wasn't idle, that my days were packed with preaching the gospel, from dawn till dusk. But she still said I was going through the motions and being irresponsible. What more could anyone ask of me? I felt like my duty was just too difficult. After that gathering I hid in my room and had a good cry. I felt wronged and negative, and I was full of misconceptions of God. A traitorous feeling came up within me. I figured that since the leader had been so hard on me, God must detest me, so how could I even keep doing that duty? Maybe I should just take the blame, suck it up, and quit so the work of God's house wouldn't be held up and I

wouldn't be doing a thankless task. Bawling my eyes out, I had the feeling that I wasn't in the right state. I'd been a believer for so many years, and the moment I was dealt with a bit harshly, I just couldn't take it. I reasoned and vied with God, and even wanted to throw in the towel. I didn't have any true stature. I was reminded of God's words, to stay true to our duties even if the sky comes crashing down. Thinking of this really spurred me on. No matter what God or the leader thought of me, I couldn't fall apart, and I had to rise to the challenge, no matter how hard my duty was. I didn't feel as miserable when I thought about it like that. I immediately wiped away my tears and went to discuss with brothers and sisters. Within just a few days, I'd brought that co-worker into the fold. But after that, I didn't earnestly seek the truth and reflect on my problems. Instead, I was insisting on continuing to do my duty based on my own conscience and will. I thought I had some stature and some practicality.

In fact, the leader dealt with me for being irresponsible, taking the easy way out, and not doing practical work. These were really serious problems. I was heading up our gospel work, and when I saw someone with a lot of notions, I wasn't willing to throw myself into my fellowship and witness. I just casually set it aside and let half a month pass. That was delaying so many people looking into the true way and welcoming the Lord's return! Being so cavalier in my duty was resisting God and offending His disposition. I never seemed to be idle and I could pay a price in my duty, but whenever I faced a challenge, I wouldn't focus on seeking the truth to resolve the problem and do my duty well. Instead I'd pull back and do whatever suited me, just nonchalantly setting God's commission to the side. How was that any kind of devotion? The leader spoke out about my casual, irresponsible attitude in my duty, about my deceitful satanic disposition, and it wasn't the first time I'd done something like that. The leader

dissected it for me so I could know myself, repent, and change, but I didn't genuinely reflect on myself or see where the root of my problems was. I acted like I accepted being pruned and dealt with, but I didn't have any true understanding of myself. That's why I said some empty things and doctrines in the gathering and then pretended I had gained self-awareness. I said I was irresponsible in my duty and was holding up the work of God's house, seriously damaging it, that the leader was very justified in her reprimand of me, and that she was bringing up things in my nature, my satanic disposition, so I couldn't analyze the right and wrong of what I'd done. But I never fellowshiped on where I went wrong, the nature and consequences of my actions as well as what kind of corrupt disposition I revealed in my casual attitude toward my duty, and what kind of absurd thinking and notions I held. I paid no mind to these more detailed aspects of it. What did I talk about instead? How I leaned on God and entered in from the positive. I went on and on about these kinds of positive understandings. I said I felt negative and complained when I was dealt with and I wanted to throw the towel in, but thinking of God's words really inspired me and I felt I couldn't crumble. God had done so much work in me and He'd given me so much, so I had to have a conscience and I couldn't let God down. So I thought that no matter how I was pruned and dealt with, no matter how hard my duty was, I had to do it well, and the leader dealing with me was to have me reflect on and know myself, to repent and change. When the others heard this, they didn't have any discernment over my issues and corruption and they didn't feel like I'd done major harm to the work of God's house. Instead, they felt like the leader was really hard on me, that I was pruned and dealt with just for a little slip-up in my work. They were really sympathetic and understanding. And seeing I hadn't become negative after being dealt with so harshly, but could keep on shouldering my duty, they

felt I really understood the truth and had stature. They really looked up to me and adulated me. A few said at the time that my staying strong and continuing to do my duty when dealt with so severely was really admirable. And some said my duty wasn't easy at all, that I'd not only put all that energy in, but I was reprimanded when something slipped through the cracks. They saw me wipe away my tears to go right back to my duty, and said they'd have crumbled long before and didn't have that stature. They listened to my fellowship and didn't understand the path of practice for accepting dealing and pruning, or that being pruned and dealt with was God's love and salvation. Instead, they misunderstood God, got their guard up, and distanced themselves from God, drawing closer to me. I was dealt with a few times after that, and it went the same way every time. I was always talking about literal doctrines, feigning spirituality and self-knowledge, pretending to have stature and practicality, and I fooled all the brothers and sisters. I was totally unaware, totally numb, and I was really proud of myself for keeping myself standing through it. I was incredibly self-congratulatory and felt I had stature and the reality of the truth. I became more and more arrogant and self-assured.

One time, a brother pointed out some issues in my duty. I refused to accept it, complaining that he was looking for problems, that he was nitpicking. I was really annoyed with him. But I was afraid someone would see how arrogant I was even after being a believer for all those years and would think poorly of me. I was also afraid the leader would find out and say I couldn't accept the truth, so I faked it and forced myself not to complain about it. Acting calm, I said to him, "Brother, tell me all about the issues you see here and we'll talk through them one by one. If we can't resolve them, we can talk with a leader." So he listed out the problems one by one, and I explained my rebuttal for each one. By the end, I'd explained

away the majority of the issues he'd raised. I saw the problem as resolved and I felt very pleased. But he felt uneasy about it, so he went to discuss it with a leader. Some of the issues he'd raised really were problems, and once the leader found out, she dealt with and pruned me right in front of everyone. She said I was arrogant and wouldn't accept anyone else's suggestions, that I wasn't principled in my duty, and I totally lacked the reality of the truth even after all those years of faith. She said I couldn't resolve any practical problems, that I was blindly arrogant and totally unreasonable. This was hard for me to hear, but I wasn't totally convinced. I thought, "I am arrogant and sometimes kind of self-assured, but I can take some suggestions. I'm not all that arrogant."

Once again, I was exposed in a work meeting shortly after that. The leader discovered I was procrastinating in the work I was in charge of and asked me, "Why are you working so inefficiently on this? What's the problem? Can you do better?" My response was, "No, I can't." I felt like the leader didn't understand our actual situation, that she expected too much. After that she read some of God's words for us and fellowshiped on the significance of spreading the gospel. She also said time was really tight and we had to improve our efficiency. I didn't really take in anything she had to say. I just stuck with my own notions and my own experience, thinking, "I really can't increase our efficiency." I quietly asked the brothers and sisters next to me, "Do you think we can?" My motive behind asking them this was to get them over to my side, to have them say the same thing as me, to push back against the leader and keep the pace slow. It was so obvious, but I was totally unaware. They didn't have any discernment over me. You could say they didn't apply any discernment. They all took my side and went along with me.

Later on, since I was arrogant and ineffective in my duty, and not only didn't manage the team's work well, but stood in its way, I was removed from my duty. But to my surprise, when it came time to select team leaders again, brothers and sisters not only still voted for me, but it was unanimous. I heard some of them saying that by dismissing me, the whole team would just fall apart, and who else could run that team? It was then that I felt like I had a serious issue, that everyone listened to me and supported me in spite of the way I worked. Everyone voted for me although the leader had dismissed me, and even fought for me to be treated fairly. I had really led the brothers and sisters astray.

I thought of a passage of God's words: **"As far as all of you are concerned, if the churches in an area were handed over to you and there was no one overseeing you for six months, you would start to go astray. If no one oversaw you for a year, you would lead them away and astray. If two years passed and still no one was overseeing you, you would bring them before you. Why is this? Have you ever considered this question before? Could you be like this? Your knowledge can only provide for people for a certain period of time. As time goes on, if you keep saying the same things, some people will discern that; they'll say you're too superficial, too lacking in depth. You'll have no option but to try and deceive people by preaching on doctrines. If you always carry on like this, those below you will follow your methods, steps, and model of faith and of experiencing and putting into practice those words and doctrines. Ultimately, as you keep on preaching and preaching, they'll all come to use you as an exemplar. In your leadership of others you speak of doctrines, so those below you will learn doctrines from you, and as things progress you will have taken the wrong path. Those below you will take whatever path you do; they will all learn from you and**

follow you, so you will feel: ‘I am powerful now; so many people listen to me, and the church is at my beck and call.’ This nature of betrayal within man unconsciously makes you turn God into a mere figurehead, and you yourself then form some sort of denomination. How do various denominations arise? They arise in this way. Look at the leaders of each denomination—they are all arrogant and self-righteous, and their interpretations of the Bible lack context and are guided by their own imaginings. They all rely on gifts and erudition to do their work. If they could not preach at all, would people follow them? They do, after all, possess some knowledge and can preach on some doctrine, or they know how to win others over and make use of some artifice. They use these to bring people before themselves and deceive them. Nominally, those people believe in God, but in reality, they follow their leaders. When they encounter someone preaching the true way, some of them say, ‘We have to consult our leader about our faith.’ A human is the medium of their faith in God; is that not a problem? What have those leaders become, then? Have they not become Pharisees, false shepherds, antichrists, and stumbling blocks to people’s acceptance of the true way? Such people are of the same ilk as Paul” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only to Pursue the Truth Is Truly to Believe in God). I could see from God’s words that I was exactly the kind of Pharisee He exposes, and I not only had this deceitful, evil satanic disposition, but my behavior had reached a point that I was misleading and controlling others, and putting God to the side. I thought about those hypocritical Pharisees and clergy members who just talk about doctrine and act like they work hard to mislead people. They say that they’re indebted to God and they seem really humble and self-aware, but they’re always displaying how much they give up for the Lord, how much they suffer and how much work

they've done. As a result, believers worship them and think everything they say is in line with the Lord's will. They don't have any discernment over them. They even think that obeying them is obeying the Lord. That's believing in the Lord in name, but in reality it's following the clergy. How was the path I was taking any different from the Pharisees' and clergy's path? I also focused on doctrine and superficial sacrifices so that brothers and sisters would think I was devoted to my duty. When I was dealt with, I didn't seek the truth or truly reflect on myself. I'd just say what seemed right to mislead everyone so they'd think I was submitting to it, that I had stature, and then they'd adore me and listen to me. I even got them to go up against God's requirements with me. I was the one actually in power. How was I any different from an antichrist? I wasn't a leader and didn't have any kind of lofty position. I just shared responsibility for some work with two other sisters under the leader's supervision, but even so, my problem had gotten that bad. If I did get into a higher position where I was solely responsible for something, I hate to think of what kind of great evil I might have done. I thought that since I was a long-time believer and I kept doing my duty no matter what kind of hardship or trials I faced, I was of pretty good humanity, and I never struggled to become a leader, so I'd never become a Pharisee or an antichrist. But when faced with the facts, I was dumbfounded and had nothing to say. I finally saw how absurd and harmful my notions were, and how evil, how frightening my disposition was. I saw that as a believer, I didn't pursue the truth, and I wouldn't accept or submit to being judged, chastised, dealt with, or pruned by God. I wouldn't reflect on and know my satanic nature in light of God's words. I was content to obey superficially and acknowledge vocally. But no matter how good or rule-abiding I appeared to be, the moment an opportunity arose, my satanic nature of betraying God fully came to the fore, and I unwittingly committed

evil that I wasn't even aware of. It truly was just as God says: **"The chance that you will betray Me remains one hundred percent."**

God knew how deeply corrupted by Satan, how numb and stubborn I was. I couldn't achieve change just by knowing a little bit about myself. So, I was later exposed and dealt with by brothers and sisters. I remember one time a sister said to me, without mincing words, "I have some discernment over you now. You hardly ever fellowship on your innermost thoughts or reveal your own corruption. You just talk about some of your positive entry and understanding, as if your corruption were entirely resolved, as if you were free of it." She also said that she used to adore me, that she thought I was a longstanding believer who understood the truth, that I knew how to experience in many things and I could suffer and pay a price in my duty, and particularly that I could accept being dealt with and pruned severely. That's why she had looked up to me. She thought everything I said was right and she always listened to me, practically giving me the place of God in her heart. Hearing her say she'd practically come to see me like God was like being struck by a bolt of lightning. I was really scared and was really resistant to it. I thought, "If that's true, haven't I become an antichrist? How could you be so stupid, so undiscerning? I'm also corrupted by Satan. How could you have seen me that way?" I was devastated for days. I felt gutted every time I thought of what she'd said, and I had this strange feeling of terror, that something awful was closing in on me. I knew this was God's wrath toward me, that His righteous disposition was coming upon me and I had to accept the consequences of doing that kind of evil. I knew that God's disposition brooked no offense and I felt that I'd already been condemned by God, so I thought my path of faith was at its end. I couldn't keep my tears back at this thought. I never imagined that I, someone who didn't seem to do great evil or really bad things, could get to a point that was so

grave. I not only misled people with doctrines, but I led them to worship me as if I were God. That was turning God into a figurehead, and it seriously offended God's disposition. I was feeling really negative, and my transgressions and evil deeds felt burned into my heart. I felt like I was just like a Pharisee, an antichrist, that I was of Satan, a service-doer who would be eliminated. I just didn't understand how I had let myself get to that point. In my regret, I came before God and repented, saying, "God, I've done great evil. I've offended Your disposition and I should be cursed and punished! I'm not asking for Your forgiveness, I just ask that You enlighten me so I can understand my satanic nature and see the truth of my corruption by Satan. God, I wish to repent, to be honest and upright."

In the days that followed, I started reflecting on why I had gotten to such a terrible place, and where the root of the problem was. I read this in my devotionals one time: **"So what persona do antichrists invest themselves with? Who are they pretending to be? Their impersonation, of course, is for the sake of status and reputation. It cannot be divorced from those things, or else they would not possibly put on such a pretense—there is no way they could do something so foolish. Given that such behavior is considered reproachful, loathsome and repulsive, why do they still do it? They undoubtedly have their own aims and motivations—there are intentions and motivations involved. If antichrists are to gain status in people's minds, they must make these people think highly of them. And what makes people do that? In addition to impersonating some behaviors and expressions that, in people's notions, are believed good, one other aspect is that antichrists also impersonate certain behaviors and images that people believe great and grand, in order to make others think highly of them"** (The Word,

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Utmost Importance (18)). **“No matter what the setting is, or where they are performing their duty, the antichrists give the appearance of not being weak, of having the utmost love for God, of being full of faith in God, of never having been negative, hiding from others the real attitude and the real view they hold in the depths of their heart on the truth and on God. In fact, in the depths of their heart, do they really believe themselves all-powerful? Do they really believe themselves to have no weakness? No. So, knowing that they are possessed of weakness, rebelliousness, and corrupt dispositions, why do they speak and behave in such a way in front of others? Their aim is obvious: It is simply to protect their status among and before others. They believe that if, in front of others, they are openly negative, openly say things that are weak, reveal rebelliousness, and talk of knowing themselves, then this is something that harms their status and reputation, it is a loss. They would therefore rather die than say that they are weak and negative, and that they are not perfect, but are just an ordinary person. They think that if they admit that they have a corrupt disposition, that they are an ordinary person, a small and insignificant being, then they will lose their status in people’s minds. And so, no matter what, they cannot let go of this status, but instead do their utmost to secure it. Every time they encounter a problem, they step forward—but upon seeing that they could be exposed, that people could see through them, they quickly hide. If there is any room to maneuver, if they still have the chance of parading themselves, of pretending that they are an expert, that they know about this matter, and understand it, and can solve this problem, then they rush forward to grab the opportunity to earn others’ appreciation, to let them know they are skilled in this area”** (The Word, Vol.

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Utmost Importance (18)). **“These antichrists want to play the role of spiritual people, they want to be the preeminent ones among the brothers and sisters, to be people who possess the truth, and understand the truth, and can help those who are weak and immature. And what is their aim in playing this role? First, they believe themselves to have already transcended the flesh, to have superseded worldly concerns, to have shed the weaknesses of normal humanity, and overcome the fleshly needs of normal humanity; they believe themselves those who can undertake important tasks in the house of God, who can be considerate to God’s will, whose minds are full of the words of God. They style themselves as people who have already attained the requirements of God and pleased God, and who can be considerate to God’s will, and can gain the beautiful destination promised by God’s own mouth. And so they are often smug, and they think themselves different from others. Using the words and phrases they can remember and are capable of understanding in their minds, they admonish, condemn, and form conclusions about others; so, too, do they often use the practices and sayings born of the imagination of their own notions to form conclusions about others and coach them, to make others follow along with these practices and sayings, thus achieving the status they desire among the brothers and sisters. They think that as long as they can say the right words and phrases, and the right doctrines, can shout a few slogans, can assume a little responsibility in the house of God, can undertake some important task, are willing to take the lead, and are able to maintain the normal order in a group of people, then that means they are spiritual, and that their position is secure. And so, whilst pretending to be spiritual, and boasting of their spirituality, they also pretend to be all-powerful and capable of anything, a perfect**

person, and think they can do everything, and are good at everything”

(The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. For Leaders and Workers, Choosing a Path Is of Utmost Importance (18)).

God’s words showed me why I was always so hypocritical and only showed my good side in fellowship, while going to great lengths to hide my ugly, evil side so that no one could see it. It was to protect the place I held in people’s hearts, to maintain the image people had of me as a long-time believer. Then they’d think that I was special with my years of faith, different from other brothers and sisters, that I understood the truth and had stature, so they’d look up to me, adore me. I realized I was so arrogant, evil, and deceitful! I thought I was a long-time believer and understood some doctrines, so I put myself on a pedestal and started pretending to be a spiritual person. I lacked the reality of the truth and didn’t focus on seeking and pursuing the truth. I just used doctrine, good behavior, and some superficial sacrifices to cover the ugly reality that I lacked the reality of the truth. I didn’t reflect on and know myself when I was pruned and dealt with, I didn’t dissect my problems and corruption. I concealed my ugly motives and corrupt disposition so no one would find out about them, to protect my position and image. How were these hypocritical displays any different from those of the Pharisees who opposed the Lord Jesus? The Lord Jesus rebuked the Pharisees: **“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like to white washed sepulchers, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men’s bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but within you are full of hypocrisy and iniquity”** (Matthew 23:27–28). **“You blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel”** (Matthew 23:24). Wasn’t I exactly the same? It looked like I fellowshiped on my experience, but I just talked about things that everyone could see, just empty doctrines,

while hiding, never once mentioning my true thoughts, and those corrupt, evil things within me. That way people would think that even though I had corruption and rebelliousness, I was still much better than other people. I was straining out gnats while swallowing a camel. I looked humble from the outside, but inside, I was just guarding my own name and status, guarding the image others had of me. I was so hypocritical, so slippery and deceitful. I'd fooled all of the brothers and sisters. I wasn't being a good, upright person or staying in my place as a created being, and I wasn't experiencing God's work from the perspective of someone deeply corrupted by Satan, accepting being judged, chastised, pruned and dealt with by God to get rid of my corruption. Instead, I was using my duty to show off, to establish myself and mislead others, vying with God for His chosen people. Wasn't that the path of opposing God, of being an antichrist? It was a path condemned by God. As for me, aside from my long time in the faith, I was no match for the others in caliber or pursuit of the truth. I didn't have the reality of the truth after all that time, and my life disposition hadn't changed. I was the same arrogant, self-important image of Satan and I wasn't principled in my duty. Not only did I fail to care for God's will and exalt God, but I hindered our gospel work. Considering all my years as a believer, that was really shameful. But I thought that was the capital I could use to exalt myself and get people to look up to me. I was so unreasonable, so shameless!

I read this passage of God's words in one of my devotionals: **"If a person does not pursue the truth, he will never understand it. You can say the letters and doctrines ten thousand times, but they will still just be letters and doctrines. Some people just say, 'Christ is the truth, the way, and the life.' Even if you repeat these words ten thousand times, it will still be useless; you have no understanding of its meaning. Why is it**

said that Christ is the truth, the way, and the life? Can you articulate the knowledge you have gained about this from experience? Have you entered the reality of the truth, the way, and the life? God has uttered His words so that you can experience them and gain knowledge; merely voicing letters and doctrines is useless. You can only know yourself once you have understood and entered God's words. If you do not understand God's words, then you cannot know yourself. You can only discern when you have the truth; without the truth, you cannot discern. You can only fully understand a matter when you have the truth; without the truth, you cannot understand a matter. You can only know yourself when you have the truth; without the truth, you cannot know yourself. Your disposition can only change when you have the truth; without the truth, your disposition cannot change. Only after you have the truth can you serve in accordance with God's will; without the truth, you cannot serve in accordance with God's will. Only after you have the truth can you worship God; without the truth, your worship will be nothing more than a performance of religious rites. All of these things hinge on gaining the truth from God's words" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. How to Know Man's Nature). Reading this helped me understand even more clearly why I'd taken the wrong path of opposing God like a Pharisee. It was because I hadn't ever pursued the truth or put it into practice over the years, and when reading God's words, I just focused on the literal meaning. I wasn't entering into or practicing His words, and I didn't have any real understanding of the truth. So naturally, I could only expound literal doctrine. In my faith, I didn't love the truth or thirst for God's words, and I hardly ever quieted myself before God to ponder His words, like what aspect of the truth a passage revealed, how much I understood, practiced, and entered into, what God's will was, or how much

His words had achieved in me. When something happened, I didn't try to think about my own state in light of God's words, to reflect on my own personal problems and examine what type of corruption I was revealing, and what kind of mistaken notions I had. I was just constantly keeping myself busy, just like Paul, thinking about suffering for my work and satisfying my own ambitions. God incarnate of the last days has expressed so many truths and He's fellowshiped in so much detail on all sorts of aspects of the truth. That's so that we can understand the truth, understand the truth of our corruption by Satan, and repent and change. But I took God's words really lightly. I didn't ponder or seek them, and I gave no thought to practicing or entering into them. Wasn't this entirely counter to God's will in saving mankind? Wasn't this entirely the same as the path taken by the Pharisees and pastors in religion? The Pharisees only cared about preaching, suffering in their work, and protecting their positions. They never practiced God's words and they weren't able to share their own experience and understanding of God's words. They couldn't lead people into the reality of the truth, but could just mislead people with literal Scripture, knowledge, and doctrines. That made them people who opposed God. I didn't try to practice the truth in my faith, either, but just followed some rules. I wasn't doing great evil or great wrongs, I appeared to behave well, and shared what seemed right in gatherings, so I thought I was doing alright in my faith. But I realized, wasn't I just being a hypocrite? How was that true faith in God? If I kept on with that kind of faith, without any reality of the truth, without any changes to my corrupt disposition, wouldn't I end up being eliminated? I was filled with regret and I prayed to God, "I don't want to be a hypocrite anymore. I want to pursue the truth, accept and submit to Your judgment and chastisement, and change myself."

After that, I read this passage of God's words in my devotionals: **"For example, you think that once you have a status, you need to have an authoritative sort of presentation, and speak with a certain air. After you realize that this is an erroneous way of thinking, you should forsake it; do not walk that path. When you have thoughts like these, you must get out of that state, and not allow yourself to get stuck in it. Once you become stuck in it, and those thoughts and views take shape within you, you will disguise yourself, you will package yourself, doing it incredibly tightly so that no one is able to see into you or get a sense of your heart and mind. You will be speaking with others as though from behind a mask. They will not be able to see your heart. You must learn to let others see your heart; learn to open it up to them, and to draw close to them—you just take the opposite approach. Is this not the principle? Is this not the path to practice? Begin from within your thoughts and awareness: The moment you feel like wrapping yourself up, you must pray thusly: 'Oh God! I want to disguise myself again, and am about to engage in schemes and deceptions once more. I'm such a devil! I make You detest me so! I am currently so disgusted with myself. Please discipline me, reproach me, and punish me.' You must pray, and bring your attitude out into the light. This involves how you practice. What aspect of humanity is this practice aimed at? It is aimed at the thoughts and ideas, and the intentions, that people have revealed with regard to an issue, as well as the path they walk and the direction they take. That is, as soon as such ideas occur to you and you want to act on them, you should curtail them, and then dissect them. As soon as you curtail and dissect your thoughts, will you not express and act on those thoughts a lot less? Moreover, would your inner corrupt dispositions not then suffer a setback?"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ

of the Last Days. To Resolve One's Corrupt Disposition, One Must Have a Specific Path of Practice). God's words pointed me onto a path of practice. To resolve my hypocrisy and my deceitful, evil satanic disposition, I had to practice the truth and be an honest person, learn to open up to God and share heartfelt fellowship with others, and in the face of problems, share my true perspective and thoughts. When I wanted to be disingenuous again, I had to pray to God, forsake myself, and do just the opposite. I had to open up, reveal and dissect my corruption, and not let my satanic disposition prevail. I was reminded of God's words: **"If you have many confidences that you are reluctant to share, if you are highly averse to laying bare your secrets—your difficulties—before others to seek the way of the light, then I say that you are someone who will not attain salvation easily, and who will not easily emerge from the darkness"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Three Admonitions). I then felt how important being an honest person is. Over all my years of faith, I hadn't practiced or entered into that, as basic a truth as it is. It was pathetic! So I prayed to God, willing to repent, practice the truth, and be an honest person.

From then on, whenever I heard someone say I understood the truth and had stature, I felt really uncomfortable and embarrassed. I didn't revel in it like I had before. There was one time I met a sister who heard I'd been a believer for a long time and could suffer for my duty, and she really admired me. She said right to my face, "Sister, I know you've been in the faith for a long time, you've heard lots of sermons and understand a lot of truths. I really admire you." Hearing her say this scared me and I felt my skin crawl. I explained the truth of the matter right away, saying, "Sister, that's not really the case. Don't just look at appearances. I've believed in God for a long time, but I'm lacking in caliber, and I don't love or pursue the truth. I've just made some superficial sacrifices through all my years of

faith. I do some good things and can pay a price, but I haven't been principled in my duty and I haven't changed my life disposition much. I haven't been able to take on the duties God has commissioned me with. I don't consider God's will or exalt Him, instead I oppose God and bring shame upon Him." I shared this fellowship with her later on: "Your perspective isn't in line with the truth. Don't just blindly adulate people, but look at people and things based on the truths in God's words. How does God look at people? He doesn't care how many years they've believed, how much they've suffered and pounded the pavement, or how much they can preach. He cares whether they pursue the truth, whether their disposition has changed, whether they can bear witness in their duty. Some who are new to the faith can pursue the truth and they focus on their practice and entry. They progress quickly. They're much better than me. You should admire them for their earnestness and effort in pursuing the truth, not me for being a long-time believer or having suffered. Someone's time in the faith is ordained by God. There's nothing to admire about it. If a long-time believer doesn't pursue the truth and their life disposition hasn't changed, but they just do some superficial good things, they are still a Pharisee who misleads others. That's why pursuing the truth and having dispositional change are the most important things." I felt much more at ease after sharing that fellowship. I stopped talking up doctrines and boasting in gatherings after that, but just shared my understanding of myself in light of God's words. I also announced: "I've just barely gained some self-knowledge. I still haven't changed, and I haven't practiced or entered into this yet." My fellowship was skin-deep, but I felt more at ease.

Through my experience, I've seen one thing for sure and I've deeply experienced it. No matter how long someone's been a believer, how good they appear to be, how well they behave, how much they suffer and work, if

they don't pursue the truth, if they don't accept it and submit when God judges, chastises, prunes, and deals with them, if they don't try to know themselves and enter into the reality of God's words when problems arise, if their satanic disposition hasn't changed, they're on the path of the Pharisees and antichrists. The moment the right circumstances appear, they'll turn into an antichrist, a deceiver. This is without a doubt. It's the inevitable outcome. I've seen just how crucial it is for people to pursue the truth, accept and submit to being judged, chastised, and dealt with by God in order to be saved and change their dispositions! Thank God!

73. God's Salvation

By Yichen, China

Almighty God says, **“Every step of God’s work—whether it be harsh words, or judgment, or chastisement—makes man perfect, and is absolutely appropriate. Never throughout the ages has God done work such as this; today, He works within you so that you appreciate His wisdom. Although you have suffered some pain within you, your hearts feel steadfast and at peace; it is your blessing to be able to enjoy this stage of the work of God. Regardless of what you are able to gain in the future, all that you see of God’s work in you today is love. If man does not experience God’s judgment and refinement, his actions and fervor will always remain at surface level, and his disposition will always remain unchanged. Does this count as having been gained by God? Today, although there is still much within man that is arrogant and conceited, man’s disposition is much more stable than before. God’s dealing with you is done in order to save you, and although you may feel some pain at the time, the day will come when there occurs a change in your disposition. At that time, you will look back and see how wise the work of God is, and at that time you will be able to truly understand God’s will”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Only by Experiencing Painful Trials Can You Know the Loveliness of God). Reading this passage, I can’t help but think of how arrogant I used to be. I used to have such unrestrained desires, always seeking fame and status, vying with and comparing myself to others. I lived without any human likeness. After experiencing God’s words’ judgment, chastisement, and discipline, I began to understand my satanic nature a bit. I became capable of regret and self-

disgust, and became a little more honest and humble. I really felt that the judgment and chastisement of God's words are salvation for mankind.

In 2005, more than a year after accepting Almighty God, I was chosen as a church leader. Having been elevated by God and trusted by my brothers and sisters, I prayed to God, resolving to do my duty well to repay His love. I immediately became immersed in church work. When others fell into certain states or had difficulties, I'd find some of God's words to help them out, and though what I fellowshiped was shallow, I still saw some results. Brothers and sisters said my fellowship helped them a bit. Since I had some success in my duty, a leader later had me take on work for several churches. I was thrilled. Especially when I saw I grasped God's words faster than the sister I worked with, and the leader thought highly of me, I was quite pleased with myself. I thought the leader saw me as someone with real potential, an indispensable talent in the church. With time I became more and more arrogant and thought I now had a little reality of the truth. I stopped focusing on eating and drinking God's words or reflecting on myself, and I didn't seek the truth when I encountered an issue. I was always full of myself, haughty, and looked down on my brothers and sisters. When I saw some of them were constrained by their corrupt dispositions and couldn't perform their duties properly, I stopped fellowshiping on the truth to help them out of love, but impatiently scolded them: "God's work has gotten to this point, but you're still greedily enjoying the flesh. Aren't you afraid you'll fall into the disasters and be punished? If you don't start doing your duty well, you'll be eliminated." I saw they were being constrained and didn't want to see me, but I didn't reflect on myself, instead grumbling they weren't pursuing the truth.

Before long, a leader came to our gathering. I thought it was to promote me. To my surprise, she said my entry into life was shallow, that

my fellowship couldn't resolve problems, and that I wasn't fit to stay in charge of the work of several churches. Hearing this, I was stunned—my mind went utterly blank. I don't even know how I got home after the gathering. I just remember crying the whole way, thinking: "I've worked so hard in my duty, but instead of getting ahead I've sunk down. What will the brothers and sisters think of me? It seems I can't take on such a large scope of work, but how can I resign myself to such minor duties?" For some days I couldn't eat or sleep, but was steeped in misery. I just prayed to God, asking Him to enlighten and guide me so I could understand His will. I felt much calmer after praying, and I read these words of God: **"In your seeking, you have too many individual notions, hopes, and futures. The current work is in order to deal with your desire for status and your extravagant desires. Hopes, status, and notions are all classic representations of satanic disposition. ... You are now followers, and you have gained some understanding of this stage of work. However, you have still not put aside your desire for status. When your status is high you seek well, but when your status is low you no longer seek. The blessings of status are always on your mind. Why is it that the majority of people cannot remove themselves from negativity? Is the answer not invariably because of bleak prospects? ... The more you seek in this way, the less you will reap. The greater a person's desire for status, the more seriously they will have to be dealt with and the more they will have to undergo great refinement. Such people are worthless! They must be dealt with and judged adequately in order for them to thoroughly let go of these things. If you pursue this way until the end, you will reap nothing. Those who do not pursue life cannot be transformed, and those who do not thirst for the truth cannot gain the truth. You do not focus on pursuing personal transformation and entry,**

but focus instead on extravagant desires and things that constrain your love for God and prevent you from drawing close to Him. Can those things transform you? Can they bring you into the kingdom?" (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Why Are You Unwilling to Be a Foil?). I understood God's will after reading this. He set up that situation to deal with my desire for status, to get me to reflect on myself and take the right path in pursuing the truth. I thought about whether my eager pursuit and sacrifices in my faith had really been to pursue the truth and do the duty of a created being. The reality was that it was just to satisfy my ambition to get ahead of others, and not at all to pursue the truth! So once I had a position I was quite pleased with myself and didn't try to progress. When I was dismissed, not only did I not reflect on myself, but I was negative and weak, and blamed God. I even thought about throwing in the towel and betraying God. I was so devoid of conscience and reason, so selfish and despicable. Being dismissed was God protecting me. I shouldn't have become negative or misunderstood God, but should have sought the truth to resolve my corruption. Once I realized that, I came before God in prayer: "Oh God, I don't want to pursue status anymore. I wish to submit to Your rule and arrangements, really pursue the truth, and fulfill my duty to satisfy You." In the following days, I focused on eating and drinking God's words and reflecting on myself, and when I revealed my arrogant disposition again, I consciously prayed to God and forsook myself. I felt much better after practicing this way for a while, and I could interact properly with brothers and sisters.

After a few years of this, I was once again elected as a church leader. Not long after that, my church merged with another one, so we needed to hold elections for leaders again. My desire for status reared its head again because of this, and I was really afraid of losing my position. In gatherings

with the other church's leaders, I found their understanding of God's words and fellowship on the truth to be nothing extraordinary, so I thought being elected as leader was a sure thing for me. To secure my position and have more people see how capable I was, I offered to go deal with some issues in a weaker church, promising to resolve them quickly. Then I busied myself in gatherings every day, fellowshiping and resolving problems, and in my fellowship I purposely talked about how I did my work in the past, what great achievements I had made, and how leaders at the time valued me. I also intentionally talked about mistakes and deviations in the work of the other church's leaders to covertly raise myself up and put them down. But God sees into my hearts and minds, and since my motives in my duty were wrong, God hid Himself from me. During that time, though I was constantly busy, I achieved nothing in my work. I developed sores in my mouth, and even drinking water was painful. I was really suffering and I thought about how since I'd been there I hadn't resolved a thing and my work hadn't achieved any results. I wondered how the leaders would see me, if they would think I wasn't capable. What if I was dismissed even before the election? What a humiliation! At this thought I was itching to resolve all the problems right away, but no matter how I fellowshiped, things just dragged on as before. I felt so tormented, so I came before God and called out to Him in prayer: "Oh God! I've fallen into darkness and I don't understand any problem at all. Oh God, I must have defied You, so I beg You to guide me. I'm willing to reflect on myself and repent to You."

I later read a passage of God's words: **"You have the tongue and the teeth of the unrighteous in your mouths. Your words and deeds are like those of the serpent that enticed Eve to sin. You demand from each other an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, and you struggle in My presence to wrest position, fame, and profit for yourselves, yet you do**

not know that I am secretly watching your words and deeds. Before you even come into My presence, I have sounded the very bottom of your hearts. Man always wishes to escape the grasp of My hand and elude the observation of My eyes, but I have never dodged away from his words or deeds. Instead, I purposefully allow those words and deeds to enter My eyes, that I may chastise man's unrighteousness and execute judgment on his rebellion. Thus, man's words and deeds in secret remain always before My judgment seat, and My judgment has never left man, for his rebellion is too much" (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Work of Spreading the Gospel Is Also the Work of Saving Man). God's words of judgment and revelation left me trembling with fear! I thought back on how I'd been thinking and acting. To ensure my position as a leader and have more people look up to me, I made a show of resolving problems through fellowship to prove myself and capture hearts, elevating myself and belittling others at every turn. I treated brothers and sisters like competitors, employing tricks and tactics. I had no likeness of a person of faith, no humanity. How was I any different from an animal fighting over a bite of food? I was so selfish and despicable! I was doing evil and resisting God with my deeds and had long before offended His disposition. Suffering with those sores and achieving nothing in my work were God chastening and disciplining me. His will was for me to reflect on myself, to repent and change. Then, I gave thought to why I was always pursuing fame and status, placing them above all else. It was entirely down to being deceived and corrupted by Satan. It used education and social influences to steep my heart in these toxins and philosophies, just like "Those who toil with their minds govern others, and those who toil with their hands are governed by others" and "Stand out above the rest, and bring honor to your ancestors." These satanic philosophies were deeply rooted in my heart and had become

my nature. I was living by these poisons, becoming more and more arrogant and conceited, worshiping fame and status, always trying to get ahead and be better than others. Since I wasn't on the right path, but was living within this corrupt, satanic disposition, I was blinded and couldn't see the root of any issues, nor could I resolve others' problems, and I delayed the church's work. I wasn't doing my duty, but was doing evil. I prostrated myself before God and repented to Him: "God, I've neglected my duties for name and gain, trying to fool and cheat You. I should be cursed! Oh God, I don't want to be like this anymore. I want to repent to You." I then read these words from God: **"Since you are God's creatures, you must perform the duty of a creature. There are no other requirements of you. This is how you should pray: 'Oh God! Whether I have status or not, I now understand myself. If my status is high it is because of Your elevation, and if it is low it is because of Your ordination. Everything is in Your hands. I have neither any choices, nor any complaints. ... I do not give thought to status; after all, I am but a creature. If You place me in the bottomless pit, in the lake of fire and brimstone, I am nothing but a creature. If You use me, I am a creature. If You perfect me, I am yet a creature. If You do not perfect me, I will still love You because I am no more than a creature'"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Why Are You Unwilling to Be a Foil?). God's words gave me a path of practice. Whether I was replaced or whether I had any status, I still had to pursue the truth and do my duty well, and focus on practicing the truth in my duty and casting off my satanic disposition. After that I corrected my motives in my duty and focused on quieting myself before God to read His words and pray. I put the church's problems in God's hands and looked to Him, and I sought the truth with brothers and sisters. Those issues in the church were resolved very quickly. I was filled with gratitude to God. God is so real, so lovable, and

He was by my side, setting things up to purify and transform me. I also realized how critical it is to pursue the truth and dispositional change in my faith.

Six months later, I was given responsibility for a few more churches' work. Knowing how strong my desire for status was, and how arrogant my disposition was, I prayed earnestly to God so I could correct my motives and do my duty well. I was paired with Sister Wang at the time, who had a clear perspective on issues and was mature in handling problems. I asked for her advice frequently and learned from her strengths. After a few months like this, I'd progressed quite a lot in fellowshiping on the truth to resolve problems and doing a variety of church work. Brothers and sisters looked up to me, too. Before I knew it, I started feeling really pleased with myself again, thinking that, though I was relatively new to the faith, my fellowship was as good as Sister Wang's and I had grown in my ability to handle issues. I thought my stature had grown. I didn't realize my arrogance was showing at every turn and my desire for name and status had come back stronger than ever. I wanted Sister Wang to listen to me in everything. I couldn't stand seeing others approve of her fellowship or that she took the lead in church matters. I felt I'd had some practice and had accumulated a lot of experience, that I wasn't a clueless newbie, and that my caliber was on par with hers. We were both leaders, so why did she always take the lead? Why should I listen to her? If that went on, wouldn't I be a leader in name only? Since then, I started working harder and equipping myself with God's words so I could outdo her, and during our discussions of church work at co-workers' meetings, when she expressed her opinions, I intentionally nitpicked and found fault with them. I would then share my "brilliant idea" to put her down and raise myself up. A little while later, while discussing church work, a few co-workers liked my ideas and they

started coming to me when they had problems and listening to my suggestions. I just loved seeing them all crowd around me. Later, Sister Wang became unable to go out to perform her duty because the CCP was tracking her, so I became solely responsible for the church's work for the meantime. I didn't feel overwhelmed by the work, but was really relaxed, and thought finally I could have final say on everything. At the time I realized that my way of thinking wasn't right, but I didn't reflect on myself or take it to heart at all.

One day a leader told me I needed to attend a gathering in another area. I learned that only 10 or so were selected from the region where I performed my duty. I also overheard that I was to be promoted. I really felt like I was something, that I was the cream of the crop in our region. I got on a train with four other sisters in high spirits, but something unexpected happened on the way. We were tracked and arrested by the Chinese Communist police. Their interrogations were fruitless, so they sentenced me to two years of hard labor for "organizing and using a xie jiao organization to undermine the enforcement of the law." I was plunged into refinement after my sentencing. Misunderstandings and doubts about God arose in my heart: "Why was I arrested and thrown in prison when I was about to be promoted? Is it God stopping me, using this to expose and eliminate me? Have I lost my chance at doing my duty and being saved?" I was in such pain, and I was so lost. So many times, I wept and prayed to God: "Oh God, I don't understand Your will now. It feels like You're rejecting me, that You don't want me. God, I beg You to enlighten and guide me to understand Your will, so I may know how to enter into the truth in this situation." Thank God for hearing my prayer. One day, a sister in the same prison ward stealthily slipped me a note with some of God's words she had copied out. They said: **"For all people, refinement is excruciating, and very difficult**

to accept—yet it is during refinement that God makes plain His righteous disposition to man, and makes public His requirements for man, and provides more enlightenment, and more actual pruning and dealing; through the comparison between the facts and the truth, He gives man a greater knowledge of himself and the truth, and gives man a greater understanding of God’s will, thus allowing man to have a truer and purer love of God. Such are God’s aims in carrying out refinement. All the work that God does in man has its own aims and significance; God does not do meaningless work, and nor does He do work that is without benefit to man. Refinement does not mean removing people from before God, and nor does it mean destroying them in hell. Rather, it means changing man’s disposition during refinement, changing his intentions, his old views, changing his love for God, and changing his whole life. Refinement is a real test of man, and a form of real training, and only during refinement can his love serve its inherent function” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Only by Experiencing Refinement Can Man Possess True Love). My heart brightened immediately. This situation was God’s trial for me. It wasn’t His will to eliminate me, but to make me better able to reflect on and know myself, and enter into the truth. I knew I couldn’t be negative and weak anymore, and I really couldn’t go by my own notions and speculate about God’s will. Instead, I should quiet myself and seek the truth, and reflect on and know myself in earnest.

One night, I just couldn’t get to sleep, and in spite of myself, I wondered why God had allowed this to happen to me. Then God’s words came to mind: **“Do you truly hate the great red dragon? Do you truly, sincerely hate it? Why have I asked you so many times? Why do I keep asking you this question, again and again?”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance

and Work of God. God's Words to the Entire Universe, Chapter 28). I asked myself over and over: "Do I truly hate the great red dragon? Do I really, truly hate it?" Then I thought of this passage from Sermons and Fellowship on Entry Into Life: "Some people say something like, 'I despise the great red dragon more than anything. It has oppressed me and hounded me, and I saw its evil face long ago. I've turned my back on it.' You say you've turned your back on it, so does that mean you fully submit to God? Do you have true love for God? There needs to be some concrete indication of having forsaken the great red dragon. If you're still filled with poisons of the great red dragon, and you still judge things according to its perspectives, this shows that you have not truly forsaken it. No matter how much you may hate it, if you still lack discernment over its thinking and perspectives, over its heresies and fallacies, if your perspectives and your actions are still ruled by its poisons, then how can you say you have turned your back on the great red dragon? Your thoughts, your outlook on life, your perspectives are entirely the same as those of the great red dragon—they all belong to it, and this is why you are still living under the thumb of Satan. ... In order to truly escape the influence of Satan, we must undergo the judgment and chastisement of God; we must utterly expunge and cleanse all of the satanic poisons within us. We have to be able to love and submit to God from the depths of our hearts. Only this is truly forsaking the great red dragon. When it is the truth, when it is God's words that rule within our hearts, when we exalt God as great and have undying submission and worship for God, and we are no longer subject to the great red dragon's deceptions, constraints, and corruption—it is then and only then that we can be said to have truly escaped the influence of Satan." In light of these words, I realized I only hated the great red dragon for arresting and persecuting brothers and sisters, and disrupting and sabotaging God's work, but that wasn't truly hating and

forsaking it. Truly hating and forsaking can only come from fully seeing its evil, reactionary essence, so we can genuinely hate it from the marrow of our bones, and renounce its toxins within us. By personally experiencing arrest, persecution, and torture by the great red dragon, and being forcibly indoctrinated, I really saw it's a demon that hates the truth and hates God. I saw that it is the deceiver and corruptor of man. It bangs the drum for atheism and materialism, hell-bent on denying God's existence, and doing everything it can to exalt and flaunt itself as being "great, glorious, and right." It extols itself as the savior of the people and wants everyone to worship it and believe in it as if it were God, vainly hoping to replace God in people's hearts. The great red dragon is so despicable, evil, and shameless. And I realized my essence was pretty much on par with its essence. God elevated me, letting me practice in the duty of a leader, and learn how to resolve issues through fellowship on the truth so others could know and submit to God, but I used that opportunity to show off as much as possible, just wanting others to look up to me and do what I said. Wasn't I opposing God by doing that? I was jealous of Sister Wang and I excluded her, always pouncing on her faults and belittling her. I was even dying to have her dismissed so I could have final say in the church. Wasn't I acting like a dictator? Wasn't I being controlled by the great red dragon's poisons, such as, "There can only be one alpha male" and "In all the universe, only I reign supreme"? God's administrative decrees say, **"Man should not magnify himself, nor exalt himself. He should worship and exalt God"**

(The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Ten Administrative Decrees That Must Be Obeyed by God's Chosen People in the Age of Kingdom). Looking back on everything I had displayed, how could that be called doing my duty? I was doing evil and resisting God! My actions had long ago violated God's administrative decrees, and if God hadn't disciplined me, if He hadn't used that situation

to stop me in my evil tracks, if I had continued on according to my own nature and ambitions, I'm sure I would have stopped at nothing for fame and status until finally I did a great evil and ended up punished by God. Realizing this was a serious wake-up call for me. I had reached such a dangerous point, but had been totally oblivious. Without this devil, the great red dragon, as a foil, I probably never would have seen how much of its poison was within me, that I actually am of its ilk. I really wouldn't have been able to truly forsake it and seek to free myself of its poison. I saw that everything God had done was to cleanse me and I thanked Him for saving me from the bottom of my heart.

I reflected on myself a lot in prison and I particularly regretted that I hadn't treasured my opportunities to do my duty, but instead insisted on seeking fame and status and lived by Satan's poisons. I did so many things that were against the truth, and which hurt brothers and sisters, and I hindered and disrupted the church's work. I had hurt God so much; I owed such a great debt and was filled with regret. Only then did I have a deep desire to pursue the truth and experience God's judgment and chastisement so I could soon be rid of those poisons and live out a human likeness. I resumed my duty after getting out, and when I was elected as a church leader again, I didn't feel as complacent and self-congratulatory as before. Instead, I felt it was a great responsibility, that it was God's commission for me that I should treasure, and that I should do my utmost to pursue the truth and carry out my duty. Being chastened and disciplined time after time finally awoke my soul that had been hoodwinked by Satan. I recognized that only pursuing the truth, pursuing change in my disposition, and doing the duty of a created being well are the right pursuits! My desire for fame and status isn't as strong as it once was and I'm becoming less and less arrogant. I can work well with others and do my duty properly, and I now

live out some human likeness. I feel deeply that the little bit of change has not come easily. This has all been achieved by the judgment and chastisement of God's words. I give thanks for Almighty God's salvation for me!

74. Learning to Submit Through Hardship

By Li Yang, China

In early 2008, I noticed a lump had developed behind my son's ear. I took him to the hospital for a checkup and the doctor said it was a tumor, a particular kind of tumor that destroys bones. It wasn't life-threatening at the time, but there wasn't any effective treatment, and he said it was really painful because every time it flared up, my son would have to get surgery to excise the infected bone. Otherwise, his life could be in danger. Hearing the doctor say this left me in total shock. I was devastated. I was a new believer at the time and I figured that since I believed in God, He should be my rock. I urged myself to stay strong in my faith. I believed that as long as I leaned on God, my son would definitely recover. My son's surgery ended up being a complete success and he recovered really quickly. Just three days after his operation he was running all over the building, and he was discharged after a week. After that, I felt greater motivation in my faith. I gladly accepted any task the church assigned to me and I always did my duty, rain or shine. My family didn't understand and the people close to me were always saying something behind my back, but I didn't take it to heart. I felt that as long as I kept working hard and expending myself, I'd certainly be blessed by God.

Then one day, my son came up to me, clutching his waist, saying it hurt. Seeing that look of pain on his face gave me a bad feeling. I lifted up his shirt right away and saw a lump growing right where he said it hurt. He cried out in pain when I lightly brushed it and I knew his condition was recurring. I rushed him straight to the hospital. An exam confirmed that his disease had come back. I couldn't help but think of seeing him after his first surgery stuck full of tubes. He was looking weak and I was in agony. I couldn't bear to think about how much he'd have to endure this time.

Whenever I thought about how much he'd have to suffer, and at such a young age, I'd get so anxious I couldn't even eat or sleep. I wished with all my heart that I could take on his disease and suffer in his place. And I couldn't make heads or tails of why God hadn't looked over and protected my family even though I'd been working so hard for Him ever since I'd become a believer. It was that very day that a sister in our village came to see me, and through her fellowship I realized that my son becoming ill was something God was allowing to happen. I had to pray and lean on God, stand witness for God relying on my faith, and stay strong in performing my duty. I kept going to gatherings and I threw myself into my duty even more. During the gatherings, I shared this experience of mine with brothers and sisters. They were admiring of me for being faithful. Hearing them praise me this way, I felt even more sure that I was standing witness for God and that He would surely bless my son.

Then my son's disease appeared for the fifth time, and the doctor said that he was having too many outbreaks, nearly once every six months, and it would be life-threatening if that went on. He suggested chemotherapy and radiation to see if that would help. When I heard that, I just utterly fell apart inside. I was in so much pain that I started trying to reason with God: "I work so hard every single day, rain or shine, and no matter what kind of judgment or attacks I face from others, I've never denied You. I kept doing my duty. Why aren't You protecting my son?" I was also overflowing with grievances. I kept going to gatherings and doing my duty, but my heart was growing more distant from God. I'd often find myself clasping a book of God's words, just staring into space. I was really suffering. I poured out my heart to God: "Oh God, I'm in a lot of pain right now. I know I shouldn't blame You for my son's health problems, but I don't understand Your will or how I should get through this. God, please guide me to understand Your

will.” I thought of these words of God after my prayer: **“Suppose God had eliminated Job after Job bore witness for Him: God would have been righteous then, too.”** Then I found this hymn of God’s words right away: **“Righteousness is by no means fair or reasonable; it is not egalitarianism, or a matter of allocating to you what you deserve in accordance with how much work you have completed, or paying you for whatever work you have done, or giving you your due according to what effort you expend. This is not righteousness. Suppose God had eliminated Job after Job bore witness for Him: God would have been righteous then, too. Why is this called righteousness? From a human point of view, if something is in line with people’s notions, it is then very easy for them to say that God is righteous; however, if they do not see that thing as being in line with their notions—if it is something that they are incapable of comprehending—then it would be difficult for them to say that God is righteous. God’s essence is righteousness. Though it is not easy to comprehend what He does, all that He does is righteous; it is simply that people do not understand. When God gave Peter to Satan, how did Peter respond? ‘Mankind is unable to fathom what You do, but all of what You do contains Your good will; there is righteousness in all of it. How can I not utter praise for Your wise deeds?’ Everything that God does is righteous. Though it might be unfathomable to you, you should not make judgments at will. If something He does appears to you as unreasonable, or if you have any notions about it, and that leads you to say that He is not righteous, then you are being most unreasonable. Peter found some things to be incomprehensible, but he was sure that God’s wisdom was present and that His good will was in those things. Humans cannot fathom everything; there are so many things that they cannot grasp. To know**

God's disposition is not an easy thing" (Follow the Lamb and Sing New Songs, Everything God Does Is Righteous). As I turned God's words over and over in my mind, my heart brightened. God's righteousness wasn't fair and reasonable or egalitarian like I had thought, and it wasn't about being compensated for your work, getting out what you've put in. God's deeds are unfathomable for humans, but no matter what He does or how He treats a person, it's all righteous. It all contains God's wisdom. That's because His very essence is righteous. I saw that I didn't understand God's righteous disposition. I had this notion that since I believed in God, He should watch over me; since I expended myself for God, then He should fulfill me in every way and make my path smooth. I thought that since I believed in God, my whole family should be blessed. Wasn't I trying to make deals with God?

At this thought, I opened up my book of God's words and read this passage: **"What you pursue is to be able to gain peace after believing in God, for your children to be free from illness, for your husband to have a good job, for your son to find a good wife, for your daughter to find a decent husband, for your oxen and horses to plow the land well, for a year of good weather for your crops. This is what you seek. Your pursuit is only to live in comfort, for no accidents to befall your family, for the winds to pass you by, for your face to be untouched by grit, for your family's crops to not be flooded, for you to be unaffected by any disaster, to live in God's embrace, to live in a cozy nest. A coward such as you, who always pursues the flesh—do you have a heart, do you have a spirit? Are you not a beast? I give you the true way without asking for anything in return, yet you do not pursue. Are you one of those who believe in God? I bestow real human life upon you, yet you do not pursue. Are you no different from a pig or a dog? Pigs do not pursue the life of man, they do not pursue being cleansed, and they do not**

understand what life is. Each day, after eating their fill, they simply sleep. I have given you the true way, yet you have not gained it: You are empty-handed. Are you willing to continue in this life, the life of a pig? What is the significance of such people being alive? Your life is contemptible and ignoble, you live amid filth and licentiousness, and you do not pursue any goals; is your life not the most ignoble of all? Do you have the gall to look upon God? If you continue to experience in this way, will you not acquire nothing?" (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Experiences of Peter: His Knowledge of Chastisement and Judgment). God's words exposed all of the motives and extravagant hopes that I held in my faith. Every single one of God's questions left me nowhere to hide. Looking back, from the very beginning my faith had just been for the sake of getting blessings. I thought that by expending myself for God in my belief, God would bless me with a peaceful home life and health for my boy. That's why I kept doing my duty no matter how my friends and family maligned me. When my son's illness cropped up again, I thought that was God testing me to see if I had true faith in Him. I thought that as long as I could handle the suffering and stand witness for God, He would definitely bless me and my son would get better. So when he got sick again and even his life was in danger, my hopes for blessings and grace were shattered in an instant. I started to complain and reason with God, and I blamed God for being unfair. I even lost my drive to do my duty. It was the judgment and revelations in God's words that showed me that all of my hard work was just to get blessings from God in return. It was entirely to make deals with God, to cheat God. I was utterly convinced in the face of reality and I saw that God truly is holy and righteous. He can see into our hearts and minds. If it hadn't been for these situations, one after another, showing me that my faith was tainted and I had the wrong perspective on pursuit, I still would

have been misled by my own external good behavior. I still would have thought I was very devout and was standing witness for God. I saw that I didn't know myself at all.

I later read this in God's words: **"Faced with man's state and man's attitude toward God, God has done new work, allowing man to possess both knowledge of and obedience toward Him, and both love and testimony. Thus, man must experience God's refinement of him, as well as His judgment, dealing and pruning of him, without which man would never know God and would never be capable of truly loving and bearing witness to Him. God's refinement of man is not merely for the sake of a one-sided effect, but for the sake of a multi-faceted effect. Only in this way does God do the work of refinement in those who are willing to seek the truth, in order that their resolve and love be made perfect by God. To those who are willing to seek the truth and who yearn for God, nothing is more meaningful, or of greater assistance, than refinement such as this. God's disposition is not so easily known or understood by man, for God, in the end, is God. Ultimately, it is impossible for God to have the same disposition as man, and thus it is not easy for man to know His disposition. The truth is not inherently possessed by man, and is not easily understood by those who have been corrupted by Satan; man is devoid of the truth, and of the resolve to put the truth into practice, and if he does not suffer and is not refined or judged, then his resolve will never be made perfect. For all people, refinement is excruciating, and very difficult to accept—yet it is during refinement that God makes plain His righteous disposition to man, and makes public His requirements for man, and provides more enlightenment, and more actual pruning and dealing; through the comparison between the facts and the truth, He gives man a greater**

knowledge of himself and the truth, and gives man a greater understanding of God's will, thus allowing man to have a truer and purer love of God. Such are God's aims in carrying out refinement" (The

Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Only by Experiencing Refinement Can Man Possess True Love). From God's words, I understood that God tests and refines us, and arranges for us to experience environments of hardship in order to expose and cleanse us, so that we can see the truth of our corruption by Satan and gain an understanding of our corrupt dispositions and the adulterations in our faith. Then we can pursue the truth, be cleansed and changed, and achieve genuine faith in God and submission. Ultimately, we can be saved by God. My son getting sick over and over totally revealed the motivation to gain blessings that I was harboring. Reflecting on myself, I saw that I was thinking of everything I possibly could to get blessings from God. I seemed really enthusiastic and focused in pursuit, but my own despicable motives were behind all that. I was controlled by Satan's poison of "Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost." I thought of my own interests first in everything I did and when my hopes were shattered, I resisted God and wanted to settle accounts with Him. I showed all sorts of ugliness. I really am so selfish and despicable! How was that having faith in God? I was just resisting Him and trying to cheat Him. Realizing this, I prostrated myself before God in prayer, saying, "Oh God, all these years I've been cheating You, holding on to my motives to gain blessings. I was trying to do deals with You at every turn and totally lacked sincerity. I'm so selfish and despicable, and so lacking in humanity! I'm willing to let go of my motives to gain blessings, to leave my son in Your hands, and submit to Your orchestrations and arrangements. I absolutely will not complain!" I felt really free and at peace after this prayer.

Some time later when I was out of town for my duty, my husband called me and said that our son's disease had spread. He had tumors on his head, his back, and his neck. There was no hope of controlling it anymore. I was totally speechless for ages after hearing him say that. I couldn't bear to think of the condition my son must have been in and I really couldn't face how things were turning out. I called out to God over and over again, "Oh God, I'm so weak right now. Please enlighten me and help me understand Your will." After praying, I read this passage of God's words: **"To man, God does much that is incomprehensible and even unbelievable. When God wishes to orchestrate someone, this orchestration is often at odds with man's notions and incomprehensible to him, yet it is precisely this dissonance and incomprehensibility that are God's trial and test of man. Abraham, meanwhile, was able to demonstrate obedience to God within himself, which was the most fundamental condition of his being able to satisfy God's requirement. ... Although, in different contexts, God uses different ways of testing each person, in Abraham God saw what He wanted, He saw that Abraham's heart was true, and that his obedience was unconditional. It was precisely this 'unconditional' that God desired. People often say, 'I've already offered this, I've already forgone that—why is God still not satisfied with me? Why does He keep subjecting me to trials? Why does He keep testing me?' This demonstrates one fact: God has not seen your heart, and has not gained your heart. This is to say, He has not seen such sincerity as when Abraham was able to raise his knife to slay his son by his own hand and offer him to God. He has not seen your unconditional obedience, and has not been comforted by you. It is natural, then, that God keeps trying you"** (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God's Work, God's Disposition, and God Himself II). I considered these words over and over. When Abraham offered

up his only son to God, he didn't have any demands of his own, or argue his own case at all. He knew without a doubt that his child had been given by God and it was right and proper to give him back, as God demanded. That was the kind of conscience and reason a created being should have. Even though it was very painful for him, he was still able to submit to God's demands. Finally, he really did pick up his knife to kill his son, which shows that his faith and obedience for God were sincere and could withstand a true test. But then there was me. I said that I was willing to submit to God's orchestrations and arrangements and hand my son over to God, but I held on to my own demands in my heart. Especially when I heard that his condition had worsened and couldn't be treated, facing the pain of potentially losing him, I found I had demands within me. I didn't verbalize them, but in my heart I wanted to ask God to heal him. I saw that I was really unreasonable and lacking any obedience for God. The truth is, my son isn't my own personal property. God breathed life into him. My body was just a medium that he was born through. His entire life was preordained, fully arranged by God long ago. God had already determined how much he'd suffer, how much adversity he'd face for his entire life. I had to submit to God's arrangements. At this thought, I prayed to God, "Oh God, my son doesn't belong to me. Whether You will take him away or not, I know it contains Your benevolent will. I'm willing to submit and to leave my son's life in Your hands. I will not complain, no matter what You do." The pain I felt eased after praying. A month went by in the blink of an eye. One day after I got home from a gathering, my husband called and told me excitedly that all of our son's tumors had disappeared. It had been confirmed by a CT scan at the hospital. When I heard the news, I was so excited that I started to cry. I exclaimed over and over in my heart, "Thank God!" This particular experience really showed me God's great power and

let me experience these words from Him: **“Any and all things, whether living or dead, will shift, change, renew, and disappear in accordance with God’s thoughts. Such is the way in which God presides over all things”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God Is the Source of Man’s Life). This really showed me God’s almightiness and sovereignty, that He can bring about something from nothing, and cause something that was to exist no longer. Everything is orchestrated by the hand of God. I gave heartfelt thanks to God!

A year later I got an unexpected message from my husband saying that our son’s disease had come back and he was in the hospital getting chemo. It pained me somewhat to hear that but I remembered my previous experience. I was willing to submit to God’s orchestrations and arrangements. To my surprise, my son was discharged just two weeks later and he remains healthy to this day. Even though I blamed and misunderstood God about my son’s illness, He didn’t focus on my ignorance, but enlightened and guided me with His words so that I could understand God’s almightiness and sovereignty and change my mistaken view of having faith just to seek blessings. This really was God’s grace and blessings for me! Thanks be to Almighty God!

75. An Ordeal of Illness

By Zhongxin, China

Almighty God says, **“My deeds are greater in number than the grains of sand on the beaches, and My wisdom surpasses all the sons of Solomon, yet people merely think of Me as a physician of little account and an unknown teacher of man. So many believe in Me only that I might heal them. So many believe in Me only that I might use My powers to drive unclean spirits out from their bodies, and so many believe in Me simply that they might receive peace and joy from Me. So many believe in Me only to demand from Me greater material wealth. So many believe in Me just to spend this life in peace and to be safe and sound in the world to come. So many believe in Me to avoid the suffering of hell and to receive the blessings of heaven. So many believe in Me only for temporary comfort, yet do not seek to gain anything in the world to come. When I brought down My fury upon man and seized all the joy and peace he once possessed, man became doubtful. When I gave unto man the suffering of hell and reclaimed the blessings of heaven, man’s shame turned into anger. When man asked Me to heal him, I paid him no heed and felt abhorrence toward him; man departed from Me to instead seek the way of evil medicine and sorcery. When I took away all that man had demanded from Me, everyone disappeared without a trace. Thus, I say that man has faith in Me because I give too much grace, and there is far too much to gain”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. What Do You Know of Faith?). When I read this before, I merely said that everything God says here is a fact, but I never truly understood it. I thought that since I’d believed in God for years, given up my job and family, expended myself, and suffered a lot for my duty, I

wouldn't blame God or betray Him in the face of suffering and ill health. But when I did undergo an ordeal of a major illness, I misunderstood and blamed God. My motivation to be blessed and to make deals with God was exposed to the light of day. Only then was I fully convinced of God's words that expose people and my views on pursuit in my faith underwent a change.

One day in July 2018, I found a small, hard lump on my left breast. I didn't think much of it and figured some anti-inflammatories would sort it out. But over the next two months, it just got worse and worse. I had night sweats and no energy, and the area around the lump really hurt. I began to wonder whether there was really something wrong, but I consoled myself again that it was no big deal. I had faith in God and was busy every day in the church doing my duty. I figured God would protect me. One night, I was woken by a sharp pain. Yellow fluid was leaking from my breast, and I knew something was wrong. My husband and I rushed to the hospital to get it checked. The results came back: I had breast cancer. My heart skipped a beat when I heard the doctor say that. "Breast cancer?" I thought. "I'm only over 30 years old! How could that be?" I just kept telling myself, "No way. This couldn't happen to me. I'm a believer, and I've been doing my duty in the church for years. God will look after me and protect me. The doctor must have gotten it wrong." I so hoped it wasn't true. I don't even remember how I got home from the hospital that day. My husband saw a dazed look on my face and tried to comfort me, saying, "This is a small hospital and the doctors aren't that skilled. They could be wrong. Let's get you checked over at a big hospital." I felt a glimmer of hope when he said that. Unfortunately, the doctor at the big hospital confirmed the diagnosis: It was breast cancer. She also said that it was mid- to late-stage, and that I had to be admitted for chemo and surgery, otherwise it could be terminal. My

mind went totally blank and my heart dropped. I thought, “How much is all this going to cost? What if I die halfway through chemo? How will my family cope with all that debt?” I was in despair and felt utterly helpless.

After my first round of chemo, my whole body was wracked with pain. I didn’t want to do anything and was always groggy. It was only after the drugs wore off a few days later that I began to recover. I’d believed in God for years, made sacrifices and expended myself for my duty. I always did my duty, through thick and thin, and never missed a gathering. I always helped my brothers and sisters with their problems. I’d worked so hard, and for what? Why wasn’t God protecting me? Now I couldn’t do any duty. I was practically at death’s door. Did God want to eliminate me? I had five more rounds of chemo and then an operation. How was I going to cope? Apart from all the pain and suffering, if I died, would that mean all my years of faith had been a waste of time? That thought brought me to tears. I was really tormented over those few days. I read God’s words but they didn’t sink in, and I wasn’t willing to pray. My spirit was so dark and I was getting further and further from God.

One day, Sister Li from the church came to see me and kindly asked about my condition. Seeing me in such pain and feeling so down, she gave me fellowship. She said, “God permits illness to befall us. We have to pray and seek more and God will surely lead us to understand His will. ...” Hearing her fellowship stirred my heart. Maybe God didn’t want to eliminate me but there was just a lesson He wanted me to learn! After she left, I went before God to pray, saying, “God, I’ve been living in pain ever since I got sick, misunderstanding and blaming You. Through my sister’s reminder today, now I know that there is Your will behind this illness, but I still don’t know what the lesson I should learn in this situation is. Please guide me.”

After that, I went before God and prayed to Him like this every day. One day, I read these words of God: **“Entry into trials leaves you without love or faith, you lack prayer and are unable to sing hymns, and without realizing it, in the midst of this you come to know yourself. God has many means of perfecting man. He employs all manner of environments to deal with the corrupt disposition of man, and uses various things to lay man bare; in one regard, He deals with man, in another He lays man bare, and in another He reveals man, digging out and revealing the ‘mysteries’ in the depths of man’s heart, and showing man his nature by revealing many of his states. God perfects man through many methods—through revelation, through dealing with man, through man’s refinement, and chastisement—so that man may know that God is practical”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Only Those Who Focus on Practice Can Be Perfected). As I pondered God’s words, I finally began to understand His will. God works in the last days to perfect people by exposing our corrupt dispositions through all kinds of situations, and by using the judgment and revelations of His words to make us understand our satanic dispositions, seek and practice the truth, and ultimately have our corrupt dispositions cleansed and changed. I understood that God had allowed me to get sick not because He wanted to eliminate me or hurt me on purpose, but to cleanse and change me. I couldn’t misunderstand God or wallow anymore. I had to submit, seek the truth in my sickness, and reflect on and know myself. Once I’d understood God’s will, I no longer felt so dejected or in such pain. I said a prayer of submission to God.

And once I’d finished, a line from God’s words came to mind: **“Your pursuit is only to live in comfort, for no accidents to befall your family, for the winds to pass you by, for your face to be untouched by grit...”**

(The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Experiences of Peter: His Knowledge of

Chastisement and Judgment). I hurriedly looked it up in my book of God's words and found this passage: **"You hope that your faith in God will not entail any challenges or tribulations, or the slightest hardship. You always pursue those things that are worthless, and you attach no value to life, instead putting your own extravagant thoughts before the truth. You are so worthless! You live like a pig—what difference is there between you, and pigs and dogs? Are those who do not pursue the truth, and instead love the flesh, not all beasts? Are those dead ones without spirits not all walking corpses? How many words have been spoken among you? Has only a little work been done among you? How much have I provided among you? So why have you not gained it? What do you have to complain of? Is it not the case that you have gained nothing because you are too in love with the flesh? And is it not because your thoughts are too extravagant? Is it not because you are too stupid? If you are incapable of gaining these blessings, can you blame God for not saving you? What you pursue is to be able to gain peace after believing in God, for your children to be free from illness, for your husband to have a good job, for your son to find a good wife, for your daughter to find a decent husband, for your oxen and horses to plow the land well, for a year of good weather for your crops. This is what you seek. Your pursuit is only to live in comfort, for no accidents to befall your family, for the winds to pass you by, for your face to be untouched by grit, for your family's crops to not be flooded, for you to be unaffected by any disaster, to live in God's embrace, to live in a cozy nest. A coward such as you, who always pursues the flesh—do you have a heart, do you have a spirit? Are you not a beast? I give you the true way without asking for anything in return, yet you do not pursue. Are you one of those who believe in God? I bestow real human life upon you, yet you do not**

pursue. Are you no different from a pig or a dog? Pigs do not pursue the life of man, they do not pursue being cleansed, and they do not understand what life is. Each day, after eating their fill, they simply sleep. I have given you the true way, yet you have not gained it: You are empty-handed. Are you willing to continue in this life, the life of a pig? What is the significance of such people being alive? Your life is contemptible and ignoble, you live amid filth and licentiousness, and you do not pursue any goals; is your life not the most ignoble of all? Do you have the gall to look upon God? If you continue to experience in this way, will you not acquire nothing? The true way has been given to you, but whether or not you can ultimately gain it depends on your own personal pursuit” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Experiences of Peter: His Knowledge of Chastisement and Judgment). God’s words precisely exposed my desire to be blessed in my faith. I thought back over my years of faith, back when all was well at home, I was healthy, and everything was good, I’d actively engaged in my duty and seemed to have endless energy. But once I got cancer, I became negative and I misunderstood, and blamed God for not protecting me. I capitalized on the work I’d done and argued with God. I even regretted all my years of sacrifice. I lived in a state of shunning and betraying God. Only when I was exposed through getting sick did I see that I hadn’t been doing my duty and making sacrifices to pursue the truth or do the duty of a created being, but I’d been doing those things to get peace and blessings. I’d been making deals with God to be blessed in return for the sacrifices I’d made. I wanted everything in this life and eternal life in the world to come. Now I had cancer, and when it looked like I was going to die and I wouldn’t be blessed, I blamed God for being unjust—I had no humanity at all. I thought over my years of faith. I’d received so much grace and so many blessings from God and had been watered and

sustained a lot by the truth. God had given me so much, but I never thought of repaying His love. When I got sick, I didn't submit to God at all. I just misunderstood and blamed Him. I was totally without conscience and sense! I finally understood that God had allowed me to get sick to expose and cleanse my motivation to be blessed in my faith and my wrong views on pursuit, and to get me to focus on pursuing the truth and seeking a change in my disposition. I felt such regret and reproached myself after I understood God's good intentions. I silently made this resolution: "Whether I get better or not, I won't make any more senseless demands of God. I just want to put my life and death in God's hands and submit to His arrangements." I felt so much calmer after that. I wasn't as anxious and distressed anymore, and I could quiet myself to read God's words, pray, and seek with God.

Once I'd submitted, going back to have chemo wasn't as painful as it had been. Though I still felt a bit nauseous, everything was fine. The other patients were surprised and envious. I knew in my heart that this was entirely God's mercy and protection. I felt so grateful to God. After several rounds of chemo, the egg-sized tumor had gotten smaller. It didn't hurt as much and there wasn't any more oozing. The doctor said my recovery was going well, and that if things carried on like that, then after six rounds of chemo I may not even need an operation. I was so happy to hear this, and kept thanking God. My faith in God grew and grew and I thought that if I reflected and tried to know myself in earnest, then perhaps I'd get better without needing an operation.

One day in March, I had my last chemo. I was both nervous and hopeful. When it was over, the doctor said I still needed an operation, then two more rounds of chemo, and then some radiotherapy. My heart dropped into my stomach and my mind was buzzing. I thought, "How could this be?"

I've reflected like I should and understood what I should. Why aren't I better now? It's a major operation, and besides the scarring, the chemo and radiotherapy I'll need will be so painful. I could still die...." I felt more and more unhappy and my whole body went limp. I began to cry at the injustice of it all. The night after my operation, once the anesthetic had worn off, the pain from the incision was so bad that it made me cry. I couldn't even take a deep breath. I felt so helpless and wronged. It was too much for me—when would the pain end? In my suffering, I read these words of God: **"For all people, refinement is excruciating, and very difficult to accept—yet it is during refinement that God makes plain His righteous disposition to man, and makes public His requirements for man, and provides more enlightenment, and more actual pruning and dealing; through the comparison between the facts and the truth, He gives man a greater knowledge of himself and the truth, and gives man a greater understanding of God's will, thus allowing man to have a truer and purer love of God. Such are God's aims in carrying out refinement. All the work that God does in man has its own aims and significance; God does not do meaningless work, and nor does He do work that is without benefit to man. Refinement does not mean removing people from before God, and nor does it mean destroying them in hell. Rather, it means changing man's disposition during refinement, changing his intentions, his old views, changing his love for God, and changing his whole life. Refinement is a real test of man, and a form of real training, and only during refinement can his love serve its inherent function"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Only by Experiencing Refinement Can Man Possess True Love). Every one of God's words entered my heart and I felt very moved. I knew that God's will in me getting sick was to have me develop some true self-knowledge, to enable me to seek the truth, and to have my

corrupt dispositions cleansed and changed. Before, although I realized I shouldn't pursue blessings in my faith, I hadn't fully let go of my motivation to be blessed. I was still harboring extravagant demands of God deep in my heart. I thought, as I'd reflected on myself and come to know myself a little, God should then take my sickness away. My self-reflection and self-knowledge were tainted with personal motives and they were just covers for my desire to make a deal with God. I hadn't truly repented at all! God had scrutinized my thoughts and used my sickness to expose me, to make me reflect on myself further and truly repent. This was God's love for me. Afterward, I prayed to God, saying, "Dear God, I now understand Your will. I wish to forgo all personal choices and requests and seek the truth in the situation You've arranged. Please guide me."

A few days later, I read this in God's words: **"When people begin to believe in God, which of them does not have their own aims, motivations, and ambitions? Even though one part of them believes in the existence of God and has seen the existence of God, their belief in God still contains those motivations, and their ultimate aim in believing in God is to receive His blessings and the things they want. ... Every person constantly makes such calculations within their heart, and they make demands of God which bear their motivations, ambitions, and a transactional mentality. This is to say, in his heart man is constantly testing God, constantly devising plans about God, constantly arguing the case for his own individual end with God, and trying to extract a statement from God, seeing whether or not God can give him what he wants. At the same time as pursuing God, man does not treat God as God. Man has always tried to make deals with God, ceaselessly making demands of Him, and even pressing Him at every step, trying to take a mile after being given an inch. At the same time as trying to make deals**

with God, man also argues with Him, and there are even people who, when trials befall them or they find themselves in certain situations, often become weak, passive and slack in their work, and full of complaints about God. From the time when man first began to believe in God, he has considered God to be a cornucopia, a Swiss Army knife, and he has considered himself to be God's greatest creditor, as if trying to get blessings and promises from God were his inherent right and obligation, while God's responsibility were to protect and care for man, and to provide for him. Such is the basic understanding of 'belief in God' of all those who believe in God, and such is their deepest understanding of the concept of belief in God. From man's nature essence to his subjective pursuit, there is nothing that relates to the fear of God. Man's aim in believing in God could not possibly have anything to do with the worship of God. That is to say, man has never considered nor understood that belief in God requires fearing and worshiping God. In light of such conditions, man's essence is obvious. What is this essence? It is that man's heart is malicious, harbors treachery and deceit, does not love fairness and righteousness and that which is positive, and it is contemptible and greedy. Man's heart could not be more closed to God; he has not given it to God at all. God has never seen man's true heart, nor has He ever been worshiped by man" (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God's Work, God's Disposition, and God Himself II). I felt so ashamed when I read this. God's words revealed my true state exactly. I'd believed in God for so many years and had always wanted to be blessed, always making deals with God. I felt that, since I believed in God and had always done my duty and expended myself in the church, God should look after me and protect me, and keep me from all sickness and harm. I thought this was only right and proper. When I found out I had cancer, I

immediately started to complain to God and wanted to capitalize on my years of suffering and sacrifice to argue with Him. When I began to get better, I said “Thank You God” with my mouth, but in my heart, I wanted even more. I wanted God to take my sickness away entirely so I wouldn’t have to suffer anymore. When my extravagant desire wasn’t satisfied, my devilish nature reared its head again, and I once again blamed God and tried to argue with Him. My behavior was just as God reveals in His words: **“Those without humanity are incapable of truly loving God. When the environment is safe and secure, or there are profits to be made, they are totally obedient toward God, but once that which they desire is compromised or finally refuted, they immediately revolt. Even in the space of just one night, they may go from a smiling, ‘kind-hearted’ person to an ugly-looking and ferocious killer, suddenly treating their benefactor of yesterday as their mortal enemy, without rhyme or reason. If these demons are not cast out, these demons that would kill without blinking an eye, will they not become a hidden danger?”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God’s Work and Man’s Practice). These words of God pierced my heart. Though I’d believed in God for years, I wasn’t worshiping or submitting to Him like I should. Instead, I was treating Him like a powerful doctor, like a refuge. I was using God to achieve my own ends, trying to get peace in this life and future blessings from Him. I saw that my faith in God had been nothing but bare-faced deal-making and I’d been using God to get grace and blessings from Him. Hadn’t I been cheating and resisting God? I saw just how selfish and deceitful I was, without a shred of humanity, living out nothing but satanic dispositions. How God must have loathed and hated me!

I then read this in God’s words: **“Job did not talk of trades with God, and made no requests or demands of God. His praising of God’s name**

was because of the great power and authority of God in ruling all things, and it was not dependent on whether he gained blessings or was struck by disaster. He believed that regardless of whether God blesses people or brings disaster upon them, God's power and authority will not change, and thus, regardless of a person's circumstances, God's name should be praised. That man is blessed by God is because of God's sovereignty, and when disaster befalls man, so, too, it is because of God's sovereignty. God's power and authority rule over and arrange everything about man; the vagaries of man's fortune are the manifestation of God's power and authority, and regardless of one's viewpoint, God's name should be praised. This is what Job experienced and came to know during the years of his life. All of Job's thoughts and actions reached the ears of God and arrived before God, and were seen as important by God. God cherished this knowledge of Job, and treasured Job for having such a heart. This heart awaited God's command always, and in all places, and no matter what the time or place it welcomed whatever befell him. Job made no demands of God. What he demanded of himself was to wait for, accept, face, and obey all of the arrangements that came from God; Job believed this to be his duty, and it was precisely what was wanted by God" (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God's Work, God's Disposition, and God Himself II). I felt so moved as I contemplated God's words. I thought, "God is the Creator. God can bestow grace and blessings on us, and He can judge, chastise, test and refine us. Couldn't God give us trials despite the fact that He loves us?" I thought of Job. God bestowed great wealth on him and he thanked and praised God, but he didn't covet material wealth. When God took everything from him, he could still extol God's name through his trial, saying, "Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" (Job 2:10). Job knew

that everything he had came from God and that God was righteous, whether God gave to him or took things away. Job's faith in God was not tainted by personal motives and he gave no thought to whether he'd be blessed or meet with disaster. He didn't complain no matter what God did. He was able to take his place as a created being to worship and submit to God. Seeing Job's humanity and reason, I really felt ashamed. Everything I had, even my very breath, was given by God. But I hadn't been grateful at all, instead blaming God when I got sick. I had no conscience or reason whatsoever! I believed in God but didn't know Him, and I didn't know my proper place before Him or how I should submit to the Creator. Believing in God with my notions, imaginings, and my ideas about making deals, I complained to God and resisted Him in the face of illness. Even so, I always wanted blessings and grace from God, and wanted to get into God's kingdom. I truly knew no shame! I saw that, even if I died right then, it would be God's righteousness for my rebelliousness and corruption. I found the path of practice in the experiences of Job. No matter how long I would be sick for, or whether I got better or not, I wished only to submit to God's rule and arrangements. This was the reason I should have as a created being. This thought brought me a great sense of release.

It was time for radiotherapy before I knew it. The other cancer patients said radiotherapy was really hard on the body and that it would cook my flesh. They said I'd get dizzy and nauseous every time, and that I wouldn't be able to taste anything. When I heard all this, I started asking God to help me escape this situation again, but I quickly realized that my state was wrong and prayed to God. Some lines from a hymn of God's words then came to mind: **"Since you were created, you should obey the Lord that created you, for you are inherently without dominion over yourself, and have no ability to control your own destiny. Since you are a person**

who believes in God, you should seek holiness and change” (Follow the Lamb and Sing New Songs, What a Believer in God Should Pursue). I knew that this situation was God testing me and that I couldn’t senselessly ask God for things or hurt Him anymore. I knew I had to submit to His arrangements. Once I’d submitted, although I had to have radiotherapy every day and my body hurt in places, it wasn’t as bad as the other patients had said. I knew this was God being merciful and taking care of me. When I’d finished my radiotherapy, my physical recovery was really fast. I both looked and felt really good. My brothers and sisters in the church said I didn’t look like a cancer patient at all. Some time later, I started doing my duty again. My faith in God grew through this experience and I began to cherish the opportunity to do my duty even more.

It’s been almost 2 years since then, but whenever I think back to those ten months when I was sick, it feels like it happened only yesterday. Though my flesh suffered a little, I came to understand my motivation for blessings and my mistaken views on what to pursue. I know now that I have to pursue the truth and seek to obey God in my faith. Whether I am blessed or I meet with disaster, I must always submit to God’s orchestrations, rule, and arrangements. This is the sense of reason a created being should possess. I could never have gained all this if everything in life had gone smoothly. This is the wealth of life God has given me. Thank Almighty God!

76. Through Illness My Motive for Blessings Was Revealed

By Zhenxin, USA

Almighty God says, **“In their belief in God, what people seek is to obtain blessings for the future; this is their goal in their faith. All people have this intent and hope, but the corruption in their nature must be resolved through trials. In whichever aspects you are not purified, these are the aspects in which you must be refined—this is God’s arrangement. God creates an environment for you, forcing you to be refined there so that you can know your own corruption. Ultimately, you reach a point at which you would rather die and give up your schemes and desires, and submit to God’s sovereignty and arrangement. Therefore, if people do not have several years of refinement, if they do not endure a certain amount of suffering, they will not be able to rid themselves of the bondage of corruption of the flesh in their thoughts and in their hearts. In whichever aspects you are still subject to Satan’s bondage, and in whichever aspects you still have your own desires and your own demands, these are the aspects in which you should suffer. Only through suffering can lessons be learned, which means being able to gain truth, and understand God’s will. In fact, many truths are understood by experiencing painful trials. Nobody can comprehend God’s will, recognize God’s almightiness and wisdom, or appreciate God’s righteous disposition when in a comfortable and easy environment or when circumstances are favorable. That would be impossible!”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. How One Should Satisfy God Amidst Trials). Reading this passage reminds me of an experience of going through an illness. There was some pain and a lot of tears back then,

but I came to understand some truths, I stopped seeking blessings so much in my faith, and I learned some lessons from this suffering, and I felt this was also a blessing from God.

I accepted Almighty God's work of the last days in 2010. I was still in high school at that time. God's words showed me that man was created by God and that believing in and worshiping God is the right path—the path with the most value and meaning. I started attending church gatherings, and I never missed one, no matter the weather. I also did my best to preach the gospel to my friends and relatives. I felt fulfilled every day, and very much at peace.

A year later, I went to the hospital for a checkup and found out I had hepatitis B. The doctor said it was difficult to cure and that it could turn into cancer if it got worse. At the sudden news of this illness, I went completely numb. My face felt cold and my hands were trembling. Suddenly my future seemed so uncertain. I felt really down on my way home that day. I just kept crying and crying. I kept asking myself, "How could I have gotten this illness? Why can't I just be healthy like everyone else?" I used to think that if I believed in God then He would protect me from sickness. Performing my duty in peace in God's house would be wonderful! But now I was sick, with no idea whether I'd ever get better, and if it got worse, I could even lose my life. These thoughts got me really upset, and I went before God to pray many times. I asked God for faith and strength, to guide and enlighten me to understand His will so I'd know how to get through this situation.

When my brothers and sisters found out, they came to support me and read me a passage of God's words: **"When sickness befalls, this is God's love, and surely His kind intentions are harbored within. Though your body may undergo a bit of suffering, entertain no ideas from Satan.**

Praise God in the midst of illness and enjoy God in the midst of your praise. Do not lose heart in the face of illness, keep seeking again and again and do not give up, and God will illuminate you with His light. How was Job's faith? Almighty God is an all-powerful physician! To dwell in sickness is to be sick, but to dwell in the spirit is to be well. So long as you still have one breath, God will not let you die" (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 6). Reading this passage, I knew in my heart that whether I'd get worse or not was in God's hands—God rules all! All my worrying and fretting was totally unnecessary. Now that I got the illness, I had to truly rely on and look to God. Whether I got better or not, I couldn't blame God but had to submit to His rule. So from then on, I prayed to God about my illness a lot and I went to get treated for it, too. Six months later, I went to the hospital for another checkup. The doctor said my condition was getting better and that it was now under control, so I didn't need treatment anymore. I was thrilled to hear this, and I kept saying "Thank God! Thank God!" I really didn't know what to say to God but I knew this was His kindness and blessing!

I went to college in 2012 but I was reported for sharing the gospel on campus, so I got kicked out. That was a really tough time for me. After all, it had taken 12 years of hard studying to get there. But then I thought of God incarnate expressing the truth and working to save man, and we can be saved only if we believe in God and pursue the truth. The great disasters would arrive soon, so I was afraid I'd be swept away if I didn't do my duty and do good deeds. I thought to myself, "Forget about college. I'll just do my best to pursue the truth and do my duty in the church." A few days later, I left home and started doing my duty in the church. No matter what duty I was assigned to, I took it on gladly and without complaint. Even facing the CCP's rabid suppression and arrests and almost being caught twice by the

police, I wasn't scared, but kept on spreading the gospel and bearing witness for God. I felt that God would only protect me if I kept doing my duty and that was the only way to have a good destination.

In February 2015, I was transferred out of town to do my duty. One day, the leader asked me to go to the hospital for a checkup as a precaution against me infecting the others. When I heard this, I thought to myself, "It's been almost five years since my last checkup. My illness could've gotten worse during this time. If it's become really infectious or turned into cancer, then I won't be able to do my duty anymore." This thought made me really unhappy. I was also very afraid and knew I wouldn't be able to accept it. I went to the hospital the next day but felt very nervous when I got there. I thought, "If it's turned into cancer or is really infectious now, will they be able to cure me here? What will I do if they can't?" I prayed to God at that time and said that I'd obey no matter what happened. But then the doctor said I had an arrhythmia, I got really anxious again, thinking, "Is this a sign of getting sick? Why else would I have an arrhythmia?" Watching the doctor's concerned face very closely, I realized things didn't look good for me. The doctor didn't say much else, but just took some blood and told me to go home and wait.

As the day to get my results drew closer, my anxiety returned. I was afraid of getting bad news and didn't feel like I could face it. I just wanted to be well again. I went to the hospital to get my results a week later. The doctor said my blood was now teeming with hepatitis B, and it had become acute hepatitis. He said it was very infectious and I needed treatment urgently. I thought to myself, "It's over. Will I be able to carry out my duty now? Will I be able to attend gatherings and live the church life?" On the way home, all I could think about was my sickness, and my bike felt exhausting to ride. Searching for treatments online after I got back, I read

that acute hepatitis can put people into comas and then they die within a few days. I became terrified and thought to myself, “Is this going to happen to me? If I really die like this, won’t that be the end of my faith? All the other brothers and sisters are so healthy. Why am I the only one who’s sick? Why do I have to be so different from everyone else?” I grew more and more envious of the others. They weren’t troubled by illness and could do their duties in peace. They were preparing good deeds and would be saved by God. Then there was me. I was sick, with no idea if I’d ever be able to do my duty again. If not, would I be abandoned and plunged into the disasters? I was kicked out of college for my faith and gave up my future in the world; I’d never had a girlfriend and left home for my duty. If God would abandon and eliminate me anyway, didn’t that mean all I’d given in my faith all these years had been for nothing? If I went home now, the CCP would arrest me. I’d definitely be caught and put in prison.... These thoughts left me more and more upset and disheartened. “God, are You using this sickness to expose and eliminate me?” I wondered. I couldn’t stop the tears from falling. I was feeling really weak, with no interest in doing my duty or in doing anything else. I didn’t even want to eat anything. I just felt totally exhausted. I went before God in my pain and prayed, “Almighty God, I feel so weak and I’m in so much pain. I can’t stop thinking about my future. I feel like I don’t have a destination anymore. Dear God, I know You’ve allowed this sickness to happen to me. Please enlighten me and guide me to understand Your will.”

A passage of God’s words then came to mind: **“For all people, refinement is excruciating, and very difficult to accept—yet it is during refinement that God makes plain His righteous disposition to man, and makes public His requirements for man, and provides more enlightenment, and more actual pruning and dealing; through the**

comparison between the facts and the truth, He gives man a greater knowledge of himself and the truth, and gives man a greater understanding of God's will, thus allowing man to have a truer and purer love of God. Such are God's aims in carrying out refinement. All the work that God does in man has its own aims and significance; God does not do meaningless work, and nor does He do work that is without benefit to man. Refinement does not mean removing people from before God, and nor does it mean destroying them in hell. Rather, it means changing man's disposition during refinement, changing his intentions, his old views, changing his love for God, and changing his whole life" (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Only by Experiencing Refinement Can Man Possess True Love). Pondering these words, I understood that God's good will existed within this sickness. He was using this environment to expose my corruption and help me know myself and learn a lesson. I thought about how God had permitted those trials to happen to Job. Although he suffered physical pain, God wasn't inflicting it in order to take his life, but to perfect his faith and allow Job to know God better. God allowing me to become ill wasn't to expose and eliminate me, but to cleanse away the taints in my faith and to make me truly love and obey Him. I couldn't blame God, but had to examine the wrong motives behind my faith, and in what ways I was disobeying and resisting God. Having understood God's will, I felt much more positive. I said another prayer to God, quietened myself, and did some proper self-reflection.

In my seeking, I read these words of God: **"So many believe in Me only that I might heal them. So many believe in Me only that I might use My powers to drive unclean spirits out from their bodies, and so many believe in Me simply that they might receive peace and joy from Me. So many believe in Me only to demand from Me greater material**

wealth. So many believe in Me just to spend this life in peace and to be safe and sound in the world to come. So many believe in Me to avoid the suffering of hell and to receive the blessings of heaven. So many believe in Me only for temporary comfort, yet do not seek to gain anything in the world to come. When I brought down My fury upon man and seized all the joy and peace he once possessed, man became doubtful. When I gave unto man the suffering of hell and reclaimed the blessings of heaven, man's shame turned into anger. When man asked Me to heal him, I paid him no heed and felt abhorrence toward him; man departed from Me to instead seek the way of evil medicine and sorcery. When I took away all that man had demanded from Me, everyone disappeared without a trace. Thus, I say that man has faith in Me because I give too much grace, and there is far too much to gain"

(The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. What Do You Know of Faith?). **"Man's relationship with God is merely one of naked self-interest. It is a relationship between a receiver and a giver of blessings. To put it plainly, it is akin to the relationship between employee and employer. The employee works only to receive the rewards bestowed by the employer. There is no affection in such a relationship, only transaction. There is no loving or being loved, only charity and mercy. There is no understanding, only suppressed indignation and deception. There is no intimacy, only an uncrossable chasm"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Appendix 3: Man Can Only Be Saved Amidst God's Management). Reading God's words, I realized that I hadn't been treating God as God in my faith. I just thought of God as a dispenser of blessings. That's why when I got sick, my first thoughts were of my future prospects and whether I would get better or not, and I went online to find out about the illness and how it could be treated. I lost all interest in doing my duty. When it got worse, I blamed

God for being unfair, for not protecting me, for allowing me to get sick, and I even regretted giving up my studies, my family, and my youth for my duty. Reflecting on myself, I wondered, “How was I able to give up everything to do my duty over these years of faith?” I realized it was because I had the wrong perspective. I’d thought that as long as I made sacrifices for God and did my duty well, then God should bless me, heal my sickness, and keep me safe from danger. Then I’d escape the disasters and not die, I’d survive and have a good end and destination. That’s the only reason I was willing to suffer and pay a price in doing my duty. My motivation for believing in God and doing my duty was to get blessings. When my condition became serious, my hopes of being blessed were dashed, and my resolve to pursue the truth and motivation to do my duty disappeared. I even argued with God in my heart. I realized that I only sought blessings in my faith. When I got sick, I only thought of my own future prospects and considered my own interests—I didn’t seek God’s will at all, but even blamed, misunderstood, and betrayed God. I was so selfish and despicable! All these thoughts of mine had really hurt and disappointed God. The facts showed me that my faith wasn’t to do the duty of a created being, or to pursue the truth. It was only to have a peaceful life and to have a good end and destination. I wanted to exchange my suffering with God in return for future rewards and blessings. Wasn’t I using God and trying to cheat Him? Paul worked for many years and suffered a lot and was martyred in the end, but he wasn’t working in order to do the duty of a created being. He did it to be rewarded and to be crowned. I finally realized that I was walking the same path as Paul. God is holy and righteous. How could He allow someone so intent on bargaining and so intent on cheating Him as I was into His kingdom? Pondering this, I finally understood that this sickness I was now going through was exposing my motivation to gain

blessings. Without this, I'd still be unaware of all the motives and taints in my faith, and that I was walking Paul's path, a path condemned by God. At this thought, I didn't feel so upset about having this illness, but instead thanked God for exposing and saving me in this way. On the surface it was an illness, a bad thing, but God's true love and salvation for me were hidden within it. God was guiding me onto the right path of faith to cleanse away all the taints in my faith.

As I contemplated all this, I thought to myself, "God incarnated and is expressing the truth to cleanse and save man. He selflessly gives us life and asks for nothing in return." I felt how beautiful and good God's heart is. Then I thought of myself, enjoying God's grace and blessings, being watered and sustained so much by God's words, but not sparing any thought for repaying God's love, trying to bargain with God in my duty, and when I got sick, blaming and misunderstanding God. I felt so ashamed and embarrassed at this thought. I hated myself for being so selfish and despicable! God was constantly scrutinizing my innermost thoughts while Satan was watching how I behaved. I couldn't be Satan's laughingstock. I had to stand on God's side, submit to His arrangements, and learn the lessons well. I then said a prayer to God. "God, I wish to let go of my desire for blessings and not think any more about my future. Whether I get better or not, I wish to obey You and stand witness for You to shame Satan." I felt a whole lot calmer after my prayer and didn't think so much about myself anymore. I then read a passage of God's words: **"God lets us live, so we should perform our duties well. Each day we live is a day's duty we must perform. We should regard God's commission as our foremost task and discharge our duties as though they were the greatest matter in life. Though we may not pursue the perfect completion of our duties, we act according to our conscience, leaving Satan unable to level**

accusations against us, and, without guilt of conscience, we may come to satisfy God and have no regrets at all. This is the attitude with which one who believes in God should regard their duty” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The Five States Necessary to Be on the Right Track in One’s Faith). I didn’t know whether I would get better or not, but what I could do was hold to the duty God gave me. I wasn’t held back by my illness after that and I was able to do my duty wholeheartedly.

I went back to the hospital later to see about my illness. The doctor said I was doing alright and my liver function was normal. My blood was highly infected, but everything else was fine. He made a point of telling me not to worry and that I only needed a normal course of treatment. When the doctor said this, I couldn’t help but thank God in my heart! I felt God taking mercy on me. I was so selfish and mean, seeking only to gain profit, wanting something from God in return for doing some duty, cheating God and disgusting Him, but He overlooked my rebelliousness. He kept using His words to enlighten and guide me to experience His work so that I’d come to know the wrong motives and views in my faith. I truly felt how great God’s love is! After that, I put my all into doing my duty. I thought I’d learned some lessons through undergoing this illness and that my stature had grown a little. So I was surprised to be exposed once again when God arranged a test for me.

A month later, my leader asked me to go to the hospital for another checkup. She said if my illness was highly contagious, then I’d have to go live by myself away from the others. Hearing her say this was really upsetting, like a giant stone was pressing down on my chest. My mind began to race: “If I’m kept away from the others, then I won’t be able to go to gatherings or live the church life. Then what will I do if one day I get

really sick and no one knows about it? When the great disasters come, the brothers and sisters can all gather and fellowship, and help and support each other. But I'll just be totally on my own. Will I be able to stand firm?" The more I thought about it, the more depressed I got. The leader gave me fellowship and told me to learn to submit to God's rule. She said I had to seek God's will more in this situation and, like Job, praise God whether I met with blessing or calamity. Hearing this moved me, and I remembered my experience the last time. I realized this had been permitted by God, and what I had to do first and foremost was submit. I then watched a video reading of God's words. Almighty God says, **"Job did not talk of trades with God, and made no requests or demands of God. His praising of God's name was because of the great power and authority of God in ruling all things, and it was not dependent on whether he gained blessings or was struck by disaster. He believed that regardless of whether God blesses people or brings disaster upon them, God's power and authority will not change, and thus, regardless of a person's circumstances, God's name should be praised. That man is blessed by God is because of God's sovereignty, and when disaster befalls man, so, too, it is because of God's sovereignty. God's power and authority rule over and arrange everything about man; the vagaries of man's fortune are the manifestation of God's power and authority, and regardless of one's viewpoint, God's name should be praised. This is what Job experienced and came to know during the years of his life. All of Job's thoughts and actions reached the ears of God and arrived before God, and were seen as important by God. God cherished this knowledge of Job, and treasured Job for having such a heart. This heart awaited God's command always, and in all places, and no matter what the time or place it welcomed whatever befell him. Job made no demands of**

God. What he demanded of himself was to wait for, accept, face, and obey all of the arrangements that came from God; Job believed this to be his duty, and it was precisely what was wanted by God” (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God’s Work, God’s Disposition, and God Himself II). As I watched this I felt really ashamed of myself. Job extolling the name of God wasn’t just empty words. His praise came from the bottom of his heart. Job knew God’s authority, His almightiness and sovereignty, so he feared God in his heart and was able to truly treat God as God. That’s why he didn’t complain or make any demands no matter what God orchestrated and arranged. Job didn’t try to bargain with God. He simply obeyed whether he met with blessing or calamity. He regarded obeying God as more important than his own life. I thought about myself: Why did I try to bargain with God over and over, stubbornly pursuing blessings? Because God didn’t have a place in my heart, and I didn’t fear God in my heart. I placed too much importance on my future and getting blessings, and that’s why I didn’t submit to God at all when I got sick. I was able to enjoy some blessings by God’s grace, and it was God’s rule that brought this sickness upon me. God had given me everything I had, so if He took it all away, that would be God’s righteousness too! What made me, lower than an ant, qualified to argue with God? So I resolved to God that I would be willing to submit to His orchestrations and arrangements. If I had to be isolated from the others, then so be it. Wherever God put me, even if calamity struck, I wouldn’t complain. Wherever I was, I would do my duty to repay God’s love. I later went to the hospital for my checkup. I felt a little nervous on my way there. I just kept praying to God in my heart and contemplating His words. That bike ride to the hospital felt really easy. When I got there, the doctor said, “Congratulations! Last month there were 1.7 billion copies of the virus per milliliter of your blood. Now, there’s only 560 thousand and you’re not very

infectious.” He also said how great it was to see such a decrease in just one month. Hearing this, I was filled with gratitude toward God. He was right beside me, ruling and arranging all things. It is so wondrous and practical!

Going through this illness made my desire for blessings and my despicable motives crystal clear. I gained some understanding of the wrong views on pursuit I’d had and of my corrupt dispositions. I also had a practical appreciation of God’s sovereignty. All this came from experiencing the judgment and chastisement. Now I don’t think about when I’ll be totally hepatitis-free. I just want to submit to God’s orchestrations and arrangements and do my duty well in the midst of this situation. Thank God!

77. The Harvest Reaped Through Illness

By Zhang Li, China

2007 was a huge turning point in my life. That year, my husband was involved in a car accident and became bedridden. Our two kids were still small and it was a hard time for our family. It was really tough for me and I had no idea how we would get through it. Then I accepted Almighty God's work of the last days. I learned from reading God's words that we all owe our lives to God, our fates are in His hands, and we have to worship and believe in God to have a good fate. I felt that I'd found something I could depend on. From then on, I started attending gatherings regularly and took my kids along to read God's words and pray. I was doing my duty in the church before long.

Later, I was elected as a church leader and I thanked God for His grace. I thought to myself, "I've been chosen as a church leader even though I'm really new to the faith. I must be good at pursuing the truth. I have to do my duty well and do whatever it takes, then I'm bound to be saved." This thought really drove me on in my duty. I spent most of my time preaching the gospel and performing my duty. My friends and relatives opposed my faith, and my neighbors slandered and mocked me. I began to weaken a little at that point but it didn't stop me from doing my duty. My husband also accepted God's last-days work and started doing his duty later, too. This made me so happy. I thought, "As long as we do our duty well and make sacrifices for God, we'll be blessed by Him." Especially when I heard brothers and sisters say that I suffered and paid a price, and that I'd surely be saved by God, I was so happy, and I had a lot more drive to work for God.

One day in 2012 I found a lump on my breast which hurt a little. I began to worry that it might be something serious. But then I thought, “No, it can’t be. I do my duty in the church every day. God wouldn’t do that to someone who makes real sacrifices for Him. With God’s protection, I won’t get seriously ill.” Thinking this, my anxieties disappeared and I carried on doing my duty just as I had before. The Chinese Communist Party’s persecution of believers got worse and worse in 2013. My husband and I were well-known locally for spreading the gospel and we were in constant danger of being arrested. We left our home and moved far away so we could keep doing our duties. I later found that the lump on my breast was growing and I worried it could be some kind of illness. But I thought of how nothing bad had happened in years and that God was surely protecting me. As long as I did my duty well and sacrificed more, I figured God would have mercy on me, and I wouldn’t get seriously sick.

In 2018, I started to feel unwell and my husband took me for a checkup. The doctor said the lump on my breast had grown as big as a goose egg and that it didn’t look good. She said having an operation right away would be very risky and that I had to have chemo first to shrink the lump before they could operate. Hearing the words “it doesn’t look good” and “chemotherapy” threw me into a panic. I thought, “Only people with cancer have chemotherapy. Do I have cancer? Am I going to die so young?” I just couldn’t believe it. I slumped down onto a bench in the hospital corridor and burst into tears.

My husband tried to comfort me, saying, “This initial examination isn’t necessarily right. We’ll go get you checked over at another hospital tomorrow.”

The next day, we went to another hospital and I was given a biopsy. The doctor told my husband that my condition was serious and that it could be cancer. He said we couldn't wait any longer and that I had to be operated on in two days' time.

I went totally limp when I heard him say this and my heart turned to ice. I thought, "Is it really cancer? People die from cancer! How could this have happened to me?" But then I thought, "No way. I've always done my duty, made sacrifices, suffered and paid a price since becoming a believer. I've endured being mocked and slandered by others, being persecuted and hunted by the CCP. I've never let anything interfere with my duty. How could I have gotten cancer? Wouldn't that mean I don't have any hope of being saved and getting into the kingdom of heaven? Have all my sacrifices all these years been in vain?" I was terribly upset.

I lay in bed that night, tossing and turning, unable to sleep a wink. I just couldn't figure it out. I'd expended myself so much, so how could I have gotten so ill? Why hadn't God protected me? Then I thought of the operation I had to have in two days' time. I had no idea whether it would be successful or not ... I was in utter torment so I silently said a prayer to God: "Dear God, I'm so distressed right now. I don't know how to get through this situation. Please enlighten and guide me ..." I then read in God's last eleven requirements of man: **"5. If you have always been very loyal, with much love for Me, yet you suffer the torment of illness, poverty, and the abandonment of your friends and relatives, or if you endure any other misfortunes in life, will your loyalty and love for Me still continue? 6. If none of what you have imagined in your heart matches what I have done, how will you walk your future path? 7. If you do not receive any of the things you hoped to receive, can you continue to be My follower?"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. A Very Serious Problem:

Betrayal (2)). Contemplating these requirements, I realized that this illness was God testing me to see whether I was truly loyal to Him and truly loved Him. I thought about when Job went through his trials. He lost his property, his children, and he got boils all over his body. Though he didn't understand God's will, he preferred to curse himself than blame God and he extolled the name of Jehovah God. Job kept his faith in God and remained obedient and he stood witness for God before Satan. But I had believed for years and enjoyed so much provision from God's words, yet I didn't understand God's work at all. When I found out I had cancer, I thought I couldn't be saved or enjoy the blessings of the kingdom of heaven. I misunderstood and blamed God. Having believed in God for years and having made so many sacrifices, I thought God should have stopped me from getting sick. Only when God exposed me did I see that all my sacrifices hadn't been made out of consideration for His will, or to practice the truth and satisfy God. They'd been for blessings and to get into His kingdom—I'd been making deals with God. All my so-called loyalty and love for God was just a fiction. It was totally insincere. I'd really hurt and disappointed God.

I then read God's words: **"Who of the whole of mankind is not cared for in the eyes of the Almighty? Who does not live in the midst of the Almighty's predestination? Does man's life and death happen by his own choice? Does man control his own fate? Many people cry out for death, yet it is far away from them; many people want to be those who are strong in life and fear death, yet unbeknownst to them, the day of their demise draws near, plunging them into the abyss of death; many people look to the skies and sigh deeply; many people cry great, wailing sobs; many people fall amidst trials; and many people become prisoners of temptation. Though I do not appear in person to allow man to behold Me clearly, many people fear seeing My face, deeply**

afraid that I will strike them down, that I will snuff them out. Does man truly know Me, or does he not?" (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God's Words to the Entire Universe, Chapter 11). God's words showed me that the flesh and souls of man have their source in God. Life and death are in God's hands, and we have no say in it. As created beings, we should submit to God's arrangements. Realizing this, I didn't feel so afraid of dying anymore. I silently made a resolution: "No matter how my operation goes, whether I live or die, I hand my life over to God and submit to His rule."

Once I had submitted, I felt a great wave of peace in my heart. I prayed nonstop as I was being taken into the operating room. Afterward, the doctor said that it had gone really well, but the removed lump still had to be tested to know how things would go. I thought, "The operation went so well because God was protecting me." I saw other patients coming back from their operations feeling really weak and disoriented whereas I felt fine and was in good spirits. The others in my ward said I didn't look like I'd had an operation at all. I kept thanking God in my heart for this. I also thought, "I found that lump on my breast six years ago. If it were cancer, surely it would have worsened ages ago. But I haven't felt bad at all over all this time. Maybe it isn't cancer. And even if it is, I believe that God is almighty and He will make it all right." I'd heard before about some brothers and sisters who relied on God when they got really sick and witnessed God's wondrous deeds. I'd always made sacrifices for God, so He was certain to protect me.

Three days later, I went to get my results, full of hope, but all my hopes turned to despair: It really was cancer.

I just sat there, not moving, staring straight ahead at the results, reading them over and over as I cried and cried. It took a long while before

I pulled myself together again. I thought to myself, “Is God using this illness to expose and eliminate me? Am I not even qualified to render service to Him anymore? I’ve believed in God for years, making sacrifices and preaching the gospel through wind and rain. Doesn’t God remember any of this? Is this how my faith in God ends?” I was getting more and more upset, and I felt totally sapped of energy.

Afterward, I didn’t want to eat or drink, or even speak. The doctor told me to take nutritional supplements and exercise more. I thought, “I’ve been handed a death sentence. What good are nutritional supplements and exercise? I’ll die sooner or later anyway.” I felt so depressed, and I couldn’t stop thinking, “Many brothers and sisters had gotten sick before they had faith but then got better after they started believing. But I’ve been doing my duty every day since I found faith in God. How could I have gotten cancer? I used to think making sacrifices was my ticket to salvation. But now, not only will I not be saved, but I’m going to die of cancer.” My feelings of blame and my misunderstandings of God just poured out of me, unchecked. In despair, I tearfully spoke to God, “Dear God, I’m in such pain. I’ve gotten sick and I don’t understand what Your will is. Please enlighten and guide me to understand Your will.”

I then read these words of God: **“For all people, refinement is excruciating, and very difficult to accept—yet it is during refinement that God makes plain His righteous disposition to man, and makes public His requirements for man, and provides more enlightenment, and more actual pruning and dealing; through the comparison between the facts and the truth, He gives man a greater knowledge of himself and the truth, and gives man a greater understanding of God’s will, thus allowing man to have a truer and purer love of God. Such are God’s aims in carrying out refinement. All the work that God does in**

man has its own aims and significance; God does not do meaningless work, and nor does He do work that is without benefit to man. Refinement does not mean removing people from before God, and nor does it mean destroying them in hell. Rather, it means changing man's disposition during refinement, changing his intentions, his old views, changing his love for God, and changing his whole life. Refinement is a real test of man, and a form of real training, and only during refinement can his love serve its inherent function" (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Only by Experiencing Refinement Can Man Possess True Love). God's words helped me understand His will. God was using illness to expose my inner corruption, rebelliousness, and tainted motives so that I would know myself, cast off corruption, and gain salvation from God. But I'd thought God wanted to take my life and eliminate me, and so I misunderstood and blamed God, totally gave up and fell into despair. I'd tried to put a price on my sacrifices, take credit for them and argue with God. I'd even wanted to use my own death to confront God. I'd lost all conscience! I felt I owed God so much, so I came before Him to pray and find out why I'd been unable to submit when I got sick, instead misunderstanding and blaming God.

I then read some of God's words. **"So many believe in Me only that I might heal them. So many believe in Me only that I might use My powers to drive unclean spirits out from their bodies, and so many believe in Me simply that they might receive peace and joy from Me. So many believe in Me only to demand from Me greater material wealth. So many believe in Me just to spend this life in peace and to be safe and sound in the world to come. So many believe in Me to avoid the suffering of hell and to receive the blessings of heaven. So many believe in Me only for temporary comfort, yet do not seek to gain anything in**

the world to come. When I brought down My fury upon man and seized all the joy and peace he once possessed, man became doubtful. When I gave unto man the suffering of hell and reclaimed the blessings of heaven, man's shame turned into anger. When man asked Me to heal him, I paid him no heed and felt abhorrence toward him; man departed from Me to instead seek the way of evil medicine and sorcery. When I took away all that man had demanded from Me, everyone disappeared without a trace. Thus, I say that man has faith in Me because I give too much grace, and there is far too much to gain" (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. What Do You Know of Faith?). **"Such people only have one simple aim in following God, and that aim is to receive blessings. Such people cannot be bothered to pay heed to anything else that does not directly involve this aim. To them, there is no goal more legitimate than believing in God to receive blessings—it is the very value of their faith. If something does not contribute to this aim, they remain completely unmoved by it. This is the case with most people who believe in God today. Their aim and intention seem legitimate, because as they believe in God, they also expend for God, dedicate themselves to God, and perform their duty. They give up their youth, forsake family and career, and even spend years away from home busying themselves. For the sake of their ultimate goal, they change their own interests, their outlook on life, and even the direction they seek; yet they cannot change the aim of their belief in God. They run about for the management of their own ideals; no matter how far the road is, and no matter how many hardships and obstacles there are along the way, they remain persistent and unafraid of death. What power compels them to continue dedicating themselves in this way? Is it their conscience? Is it their great and noble character? Is it their**

determination to battle the forces of evil to the very end? Is it their faith to bear witness to God without seeking reward? Is it their loyalty in being willing to give up everything to achieve God's will? Or is it their spirit of devotion to always forgo extravagant personal demands? For someone who has never understood the work of God's management to still give so much is, quite simply, a miracle! For the moment, let us not discuss how much these people have given. Their behavior, however, is highly worthy of our analysis. Apart from the benefits that are so closely associated with them, could there be any other reasons why people who never understand God would give so much for Him? In this, we discover a previously unidentified problem: Man's relationship with God is merely one of naked self-interest. It is a relationship between a receiver and a giver of blessings. To put it plainly, it is akin to the relationship between employee and employer. The employee works only to receive the rewards bestowed by the employer. There is no affection in such a relationship, only transaction. There is no loving or being loved, only charity and mercy. There is no understanding, only suppressed indignation and deception. There is no intimacy, only an uncrossable chasm. Now that things have gotten to this point, who can reverse such a course? And how many people are capable of truly understanding how dire this relationship has become? I believe that when people immerse themselves in the joy of being blessed, none can imagine how embarrassing and unsightly such a relationship with God is" (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Appendix 3: Man Can Only Be Saved Amidst God's Management). God's words pierced my heart like a sword, and I felt so ashamed. Hadn't the motive behind my faith been to gain future blessings, just as God said? No matter how I appeared to be making sacrifices, I was just making deals with God, all for blessings. I

wasn't truly obeying God or doing the duty of a created being. When I was new to the faith, I used to think no disaster would ever befall me, that I'd be blessed and get into God's kingdom. So I gave my all and let nothing get in the way of doing my duty. I didn't even have the time to take my kids to or from school. Being mocked and slandered by others, persecuted and hunted by the CCP—nothing got between me and my duty. All of this made me think I was loyal to God and that He would surely praise and bless me. When I found out I had cancer, I felt that was it for me, that all my dreams of getting into the kingdom of heaven had gone up in smoke. I was filled with misunderstandings, blame, and I argued with God, even wanting to use my own death to confront God. Faced with the facts, I realized that my doing my duty, suffering, and expending myself was all to get a good destination in return. My relationship with God was "the relationship between employee and employer." I wanted a reward for every little price I paid. I didn't truly love God. I was using Him, trying to cheat Him. With that kind of perspective in my faith, God could only loathe and detest me. If God hadn't used that illness to wake me up, I'd have kept clinging to my wrong views of faith and God would've forsaken and eliminated me in the end. Realizing this filled me with regret and self-reproach. I knelt down and prayed to God. I said, "Dear God, if You hadn't exposed me through this illness, I'd never have understood my wrong views in faith. The judgment and revelations of Your words have awakened my spirit. I wish to remedy my wrong motives and let go of my desire for blessings. Whether I get better or not, whether I live or die, I wish to submit to You." I felt much more at peace after my prayer, and I was in a much better state. Over the days that followed, I kept exercising and taking nutritional supplements and my health improved day by day. It wasn't long before I was able to leave the hospital.

Back at home, I saw my husband and children going out preaching the gospel and doing their duties, but all I could do was lie in bed, unable to do any duty. I began to feel a bit down. I had no idea when I'd completely recover or whether I'd be able to do my duty again one day. If I couldn't do my duty, wouldn't I just be dead weight? And then how would I be saved? When thinking this way, I realized that my desire for blessings had reared its ugly head again. I hurriedly prayed to God and then read this in His words: **“What was the basis on which people used to live? All people live for themselves. Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost—this is the summation of human nature. People believe in God for their own sakes; they abandon things, expend themselves for Him, and are faithful to Him, but still they do all these things for their own sakes. In sum, it is all done for the purpose of gaining blessings for themselves. In society, everything is done for personal benefit; believing in God is solely done to gain blessings. It is for the sake of gaining blessings that people forsake everything and can withstand much suffering: This is all empirical evidence of man’s corrupt nature”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The Difference Between External Changes and Changes in Disposition). God’s words helped me to see that the reason I made deals with God in my faith and rebelled and resisted God when things didn’t work out how I wanted was because all sorts of satanic poisons had control over me. “Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost” and “Never lift a finger without a reward”—I lived by these satanic philosophies. Everything I did, I did for myself, to benefit myself. I was so selfish and despicable. Even in my faith, I toiled and busied myself just to get blessings and rewards. I wasn’t focused on pursuing the truth or dispositional change at all. When I didn’t get the blessings I wanted, my satanic nature erupted and I misunderstood and blamed God, and regretted

everything I'd done for God. Paul worked for the Lord and suffered a lot, but he had no love for the truth, and he didn't seek to know God or change his disposition. He just wanted the crown of righteousness in return for his suffering and sacrifice. In the end, his satanic disposition hadn't changed, so his arrogance drove out all reason, he testified that he himself was Christ and he brought people before him. That offended God's disposition and earned him eternal punishment. I knew if I kept on living by Satan's poisons, then I could only end up just like Paul. God would punish me for resisting Him. I saw just how dangerous it was to seek blessings and not pursue the truth. I was so grateful to God. I thanked Him for using this illness to give me a chance to reflect on and know myself, so I could see my wrong perspective on pursuit in my faith and that I was walking a path in opposition to God.

I then read God's words: **"God is forever supreme and ever honorable, while man is forever base, forever worthless. This is because God is forever making sacrifices and devoting Himself to mankind; man, however, forever takes and strives only for himself. God is forever taking pains for mankind's survival, yet man never contributes anything for the sake of the light or for righteousness. Even if man makes an effort for a time, it cannot withstand a single blow, for the effort of man is always for his own sake and not for others. Man is always selfish, while God is forever selfless. God is the source of all that is just, good, and beautiful, while man is he who succeeds to and makes manifest all ugliness and evil. God will never alter His essence of righteousness and beauty, yet man is perfectly capable, at any time and in any situation, of betraying righteousness and straying far from God"**

(The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. It Is Very Important to Understand God's Disposition). I was so moved as I pondered these words. God has paid such a

painstaking price in order to save mankind which has been corrupted so deeply by Satan. Two thousand years ago, God became flesh for the first time in Judea to redeem mankind. He endured mockery, slander, and was persecuted and abused by followers of Judaism. Finally, He was nailed to the cross, thereby accomplishing the work of redemption. Today, God has become flesh for the second time in China in order to cleanse and save mankind once and for all. He's been hunted and persecuted by the CCP with nowhere to lay His head, no place to rest, and He also has to endure being misunderstood, blamed, disobeyed, and resisted by us believers. Yet God has never stopped trying to save mankind but instead silently does all He can for us, never asking for anything in return. I, however, made sacrifices in my duty and expected blessings and a destination in return. I went against my conscience to bargain with God. I was so selfish and despicable! I wasn't any kind of true believer. Realizing this, I went before God in prayer, willing to repent.

During devotionals one day, I read this in God's words: **“True faith in God means the following: On the basis of the belief that God holds sovereignty over all things, one experiences His words and His work, purges one's corrupt disposition, satisfies the will of God, and comes to know God. Only a journey of this kind may be called ‘faith in God’”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Preface). **“The purpose of believing in God is to satisfy Him and to live out the disposition He requires, so that His actions and glory may be manifested through this group of unworthy people. This is the correct perspective for believing in God, and this is also the goal that you should seek. You should have the right viewpoint about believing in God and you should seek to obtain God's words. You need to eat and drink God's words and you must be able to live out the truth, and in particular you must be able to see His**

practical deeds, His wonderful deeds throughout the entire universe, as well as the practical work He does in the flesh. People can, through their practical experiences, appreciate just how God does His work on them and what His will is toward them. The purpose of all of this is to eliminate people's corrupt satanic disposition. Having cast out all the uncleanness and unrighteousness inside you, and having cast off your wrong intentions, and having developed true faith in God—only with true faith can you truly love God” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Those Who Are to Be Made Perfect Must Undergo Refinement). God's words show the correct goal we should pursue in our faith. No matter how we may be disciplined in our experiences, God arranges everything specifically to cleanse and change us. I knew I should meet it all with acceptance and obedience, seek the truth in situations to resolve my corrupt dispositions, and satisfy God and repay His love in all things. Only this is the correct pursuit. I didn't want to make deals with God for blessings anymore. Whatever route my illness took from then on, I would worship God till my last breath. If God gave me another chance to do my duty, I wouldn't bargain with Him for blessings. I just wanted to pursue the truth in my duty and seek change in my disposition.

Not long after, God put me through a test.

One day, my daughter came back from a church gathering and said Sister Wang, who watered believers, was being followed by the police and no one had been found to replace her yet. She asked me who in the church could do that job. I'd done this duty before and knew it well, so I thought I'd be the best fit. But then I thought about how I'd only had my operation 20 or so days ago. The incision hadn't fully healed and the weather was getting hot. At home, I had to wash the incision several times a day. If I took on this duty and I got too busy to keep my wound clean, it could

become inflamed. My use of my arm was still limited, and if I was jostled around on an electric scooter every day, the incision wouldn't heal, then I'd really get sick. Given the situation, taking on that duty wouldn't do my health any favors. But then I thought, "The right person for this duty hasn't been found yet. If I don't take it on, won't the work of God's house be set back? What should I do?" A passage of God's words then came to mind: **"If, in your faith in God and pursuit of the truth, you are able to say, 'Whatever sickness or disagreeable event God allows to befall me—no matter what God does—I must obey, and stay in my place as a created being. Before all else, I must put this aspect of the truth—obedience—into practice, I implement it, and live out the reality of obedience to God. Moreover, I must not cast aside what God has commissioned to me and the duty I should perform. Even on my last breath, I must abide by my duty.' Is this not bearing testimony?'"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The Path Comes From Often Pondering the Truth). God's words provided me with a path of practice. Although my incision wasn't fully healed yet, I didn't want to be selfish and mean anymore, thinking only of myself and not of God's house. For years, I'd been doing my duty for blessings, making deals with God. I'd never cared about God's will or done anything to satisfy God. I really owed God! Someone was urgently needed to do this duty, and I wanted to do it. No matter what happened to my health, I asked only that I can bring God comfort. Guided by God's words, my illness no longer constrained me and I volunteered to take on that job.

I witnessed God's wondrous protection when I put my all into this duty. A week later, my incision was not only no worse, but it had healed up completely. The doctor said, "Lymphedema in the arm is common after this kind of operation, and after more than a month of recovery, the patient still

needs chemotherapy.” But since I started that duty, my incision stopped hurting, there was no lymphedema in my arm, and I hadn’t gone in for chemo. It has now been over a year since the operation, and I am totally fine. Thank God for His wondrous deeds. I personally experienced His words that say: **“Any and all things, whether living or dead, will shift, change, renew, and disappear in accordance with God’s thoughts. Such is the way in which God presides over all things”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God Is the Source of Man’s Life). Once I let go of my unreasonable demands and no longer made deals with God, I really saw God’s authority and rule and witnessed His wondrous deeds!

The ordeal of this illness seemed like a calamity on the surface, but God’s love was hidden there within it. The enlightenment and guidance of God’s words gave me some recognition of my motives to gain blessings and my impurities. I developed some obedience toward God and truly learned that experiencing illness was a blessing from God, that it was to cleanse and change me. Thank God for His salvation!

78. Lessons Learned From Getting Liver Cancer

By Li Yong, China

After I became a Christian, I was arrested several times by the Chinese Communist Party, but I never betrayed the Lord. I accepted Almighty God's work of the last days a few years ago, and, rain or shine, I always ardently preached the gospel and did my duty. I thought I'd always be loyal to God, no matter what I had to endure. It was not until I endured an illness that confronted me with my mortality that I gained some understanding of my motivation within my faith to gain blessings.

One day, in October of 2014, I was coming back from a fellowship when I felt my limbs go weak, and my footsteps falter. I thought it was because of the dampness in the body, and I just needed to take some medicine. I wasn't too worried. But a while later, my ears, fingers and toes slowly started to turn black, and I started getting thinner and thinner. I began to think I might have something serious, but I thought that, because of the efforts I'd made doing my duty over the years, God would protect me. It couldn't be anything too bad. I was sure it would sort itself out. But, to my surprise, after taking some medicine, I didn't get any better. My wife and daughters took me to the hospital for some tests, and when the results came, they said I had both a severe case of anemia and hepatitis B. They said if it got much worse, it would be untreatable. When I heard this, I felt my whole body go limp. I couldn't accept what I'd been told. I thought, "For years I've made so many sacrifices. I've suffered a lot to do my duty. I've been arrested and threatened by the CCP, but I never betrayed God, and went back to my duty when I was released. How could I have gotten so sick? Why hasn't God protected me? What was the point of all my sacrifice, if I can't get better? I've believed in God all these years without receiving

His blessings, and now my body is diseased. I guess I shouldn't try so hard to do my duty anymore; no matter how much I suffer, it will be for nothing." During this time, I still did my duty. But I did it without enthusiasm. During meetings, I didn't ask my brothers or sisters about their issues. I read God's words, but I didn't want to fellowship. After a while, my condition started getting worse and worse. My body couldn't support itself, and I felt dizzy all day. My leader gave me some time off to rest and recuperate at home. I saw my brothers and sisters doing their duties happily and energetically. But me? I was now so sick, I couldn't do my duty at all. I thought that maybe God had decided not to save me. And the more I thought about this, the more grief and pain I felt. I went before God and began to pray: "God! I've been struck by these diseases, and I feel so weak and tormented. I know I shouldn't blame You, but I don't understand what Your will is. Please guide me to understand."

After praying, I read a passage of God's words: **"All the work that God does in man has its own aims and significance; God does not do meaningless work, and nor does He do work that is without benefit to man. Refinement does not mean removing people from before God, and nor does it mean destroying them in hell. Rather, it means changing man's disposition during refinement, changing his intentions, his old views, changing his love for God, and changing his whole life. Refinement is a real test of man, and a form of real training, and only during refinement can his love serve its inherent function"** (The Word, Vol.

1. The Appearance and Work of God. Only by Experiencing Refinement Can Man Possess True Love). I carefully considered God's words and understood that God's will in me getting sick was not to eliminate me, but to make me understand the impure intent behind my faith, and to change my wrong view toward pursuit so that I could truly love and obey God. God was trying to purify

and save me. Realizing this left me feeling really ashamed of myself. Being faced with an illness was God's love. I hadn't sought to understand God's will, but instead I misread Him and blamed Him. I was so unreasonable! I couldn't live in negativity and pain. I had to obey, seek the truth, and reflect on and know myself.

Later, I read another passage of God's words: **"People merely regard the attainment of grace and the enjoyment of peace as symbols of faith, and see the seeking of blessings as the basis for their belief in God. Very few people seek to know God or seek a change in their disposition. In their faith, people seek to make God give them a suitable destination and all the grace they need, to make Him their servant, to have Him maintain a peaceful, friendly relationship with them so that, no matter when, there would never be any conflict between them. That is, their belief in God demands that He promise to meet all their requirements and to bestow upon them whatever they pray for, in keeping with the words they have read in the Bible, 'I will listen to all your prayers.' They expect God not to judge or deal with anyone, for He has always been the merciful Savior Jesus who keeps a good relationship with people at all times and in all places. Here is how people believe in God: They just shamelessly make demands of God, believing that whether they are rebellious or obedient, He would just grant everything to them blindly. They just continually 'collect debts' from God, believing He must 'repay' them without any resistance and, moreover, pay double; they think, whether God has gotten anything from them or not, He can only be manipulated by them, and He cannot arbitrarily orchestrate people, much less reveal to people His wisdom and righteous disposition, which have been hidden for many years, whenever He wants and without their permission. They simply confess their sins to**

God, believing God would just absolve them, that He would not get sick of doing so, and that this will go on forever. They just order God about, believing He would just obey them, because it is recorded in the Bible that God did not come to be served by humans, but to serve them, and that He is here to be their servant. Have you not always believed in this way? Whenever you are unable to gain something from God, you wish to run away; when you do not understand something, you grow so resentful, and even go so far as to hurl all kinds of abuse at Him. You simply will not allow God Himself to fully express His wisdom and wonder; instead, you just want to enjoy temporary ease and comfort. Until now, your attitude in your belief in God has merely consisted of the same old views. If God shows you just a slight bit of majesty, you become unhappy. Do you see now exactly how great your stature is? Do not assume that you are all loyal to God when in fact your old views have not changed. When nothing befalls you, you believe that everything is going smoothly, and your love for God reaches a high point. When something minor happens to you, you fall down into Hades. Is this being loyal to God?" (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. You Should Put Aside the Blessings of Status and Understand God's Will to Bring Salvation to Man). God's words revealed my true state to me. I wasn't making sacrifices to gain the truth. Instead, I was making sacrifices to gain God's grace and blessings. I was trying to cheat and barter with God. When everything had been going well, and I had been receiving God's grace, I'd done my duty passionately. I was always happy to help and fellowship with my brothers and sisters, no matter how far they were or how hard I had to work or what the weather was like. But now that I was sick and wasn't being graced, I felt aggrieved, and I complained and blamed God. I resisted and argued with Him. Especially now that my condition was getting worse every day, I lost

my faith in God and slacked off in my duty. I didn't believe in God for the pursuit of truth or life. I was constantly using God to satisfy my own desire for blessings. I did it for the sake of my own interests. My faith in Him was insincere. I was so selfish and despicable! Believing in God like this, even if I enjoyed material blessings, if my life disposition didn't change, I would be eliminated by God.

Later, I read another passage of God's words: **"Refinement is the best means by which God makes people perfect; only refinement and bitter trials can bring out the true love for God in people's hearts. Without hardship, people lack true love for God; if they are not tested within, if they are not truly subjected to refinement, then their hearts will always be floating around outside. Having been refined to a certain point, you will see your own weaknesses and difficulties, you will see how much you are lacking and that you are unable to overcome the many problems you encounter, and you will see how great is your disobedience. Only during trials are people able to truly know their real states; trials make people better able to be perfected"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Only by Experiencing Refinement Can Man Possess True Love). God's words helped me understand His will, that by letting me get sick was God's way of purifying my corruption. I hadn't betrayed God when I was imprisoned. I'd never blamed God for any hardship I'd had to face. I'd thought that I was loyal to God, and had strong faith in Him. If this disease hadn't come, I'd never have known about my corrupt disposition and my impure intent to pursue blessings, much less have been able to pursue the truth and be transformed. This disease happening was God's way of saving me. This was God's love for me! Having realized this, I no longer blamed and misunderstood God. No matter how my condition went, I would obey God's orchestrations, and forsake my intent to gain blessings. After that, I

took my medicine and entrusted myself to God, all the while seeking His guidance. Every day, I tried my hardest to do my duty. What I didn't expect was that, my illness cleared up without me realizing it! My heart was full of thanks to God!

In May of 2015, I took on watering duty. I really cherished this duty. I spent my time contemplating God's words, and when my brothers and sisters were having problems, I would ponder them, and find passages of God's words that could help them. After a little while, church life improved. My brothers and sisters were more driven to carry out their duties, and had the faith to stand witness in the face of hardships and oppression. I felt elated. I thought that God had blessed me by making me more effective in my duty, which proved that He was commending my hard work.

But that year, on the fifth of June, I was preparing to go to a gathering when I suddenly felt very dizzy. It felt like the ground was spinning. My face and clothes were soon drenched in sweat, and I had a terrible headache. It was just like the symptoms I'd had when I first got sick, only even worse than before. It felt like I was dying. I thought to myself: "How has this illness come back? I work hard to do my duty every day—why isn't God protecting me? Am I still not loyal enough to God?" My wife noticed the state I was in, and she and my daughters rushed me to the hospital. When the test results came through, the doctor avoided me and spoke to my daughters instead. At the time, I knew that if it wasn't cancer, it was going to be something else bad. I began to get upset, but then I thought, "That's how the symptoms felt the first time, and they cleared up in the end! Today, this is also in God's hands. I'm still doing my duty, so it shouldn't be anything too bad, right?" Thinking this, I began to calm down. A moment later, my two daughters came in, sobbing, and told my wife: "The doctor

said that dad has liver cancer ...” She was shocked when she heard this. The three of them hugged each other, crying bitterly.

My mind was thrown into utter turmoil and I felt a crushing pain. How could I have liver cancer? It was almost impossible to treat and I could die at any time. If I died, what were my wife and daughters going to do? Is this what all my years of hard work and sacrifice had led to? Were the blessings of the kingdom of heaven being denied to me? At the time, I felt such sorrow and despair. My wife, crying, said to me: “If you have this disease, it’s because God has allowed it. God is righteous. We must not blame or mistake Him. We must try to understand His will.” My wife’s words reminded me that, yes, God is righteous. I had to seek His will, without complaining. Seeing the pain my wife was in, I couldn’t help crying too. With tears in my eyes, I prayed silently to God: “God! You don’t do anything without meaning. Please, guide me to understand Your will.” After praying, I felt a lot calmer. I knew there was no cure for what I had, and I didn’t want to give my family more financial pressure, so I asked to be sent home to rest.

After two days, my brothers and sisters came to see me, and asked me how I was feeling. Seeing them, and thinking about how serious my condition was, I began to weep, and said: “Having you all with me, caring for me, is God’s love. But with a disease like this, I won’t be around much longer. I won’t be able to do my duty as usual anymore, and I won’t live to see God’s kingdom being realized.” A sister comforted me, and patiently said to me: “Brother, this disease is one of God’s love. You must pray more, seek the truth, grasp God’s will, and stand witness in your sickness!” Later, she gave me a few passages of God’s words. One of them left a deep impression on me: **“In their belief in God, what people seek is to obtain blessings for the future; this is their goal in their faith. All people have**

this intent and hope, but the corruption in their nature must be resolved through trials. In whichever aspects you are not purified, these are the aspects in which you must be refined—this is God’s arrangement. God creates an environment for you, forcing you to be refined there so that you can know your own corruption. Ultimately, you reach a point at which you would rather die and give up your schemes and desires, and submit to God’s sovereignty and arrangement. Therefore, if people do not have several years of refinement, if they do not endure a certain amount of suffering, they will not be able to rid themselves of the bondage of corruption of the flesh in their thoughts and in their hearts. In whichever aspects you are still subject to Satan’s bondage, and in whichever aspects you still have your own desires and your own demands, these are the aspects in which you should suffer. Only through suffering can lessons be learned, which means being able to gain truth, and understand God’s will. In fact, many truths are understood by experiencing painful trials. Nobody can comprehend God’s will, recognize God’s almightiness and wisdom, or appreciate God’s righteous disposition when in a comfortable and easy environment or when circumstances are favorable. That would be impossible!” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. How One Should Satisfy God Amidst Trials). After reading this, I reflected on myself. Before, when I became ill, I was able to submit through seeking the truth. I thought that I’d stood firm, and had abandoned the intent to gain blessings. But now that my disease had come back and was even worse than before, I was exposed again. I saw that my intent to gain blessings was deep-rooted and I hadn’t managed to pass God’s test. If my health hadn’t failed again, this deep-seated intent to obtain blessings and my wild desires would have been hard to see, let alone change and be purified. At the same time, I saw God’s holy

and righteous disposition. He scrutinizes the heart of man, and so He knew the corruption and adulterations within me. He used my disease to force me to reflect on myself, seek the truth, and resolve my corrupt disposition. This is God's love! Later, I reflected on my behavior, wondering why, in the face of my illness, my reaction had been to misread and blame God. Was I not still trying to barter with God? Wasn't I always wanting God's blessings, but not willing to accept what He had arranged for me? I'd always tried to make deals with God, but what was the cause of that?

A while later, I read some of God's words: **"All people live for themselves. Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost—this is the summation of human nature. People believe in God for their own sakes; they abandon things, expend themselves for Him, and are faithful to Him, but still they do all these things for their own sakes. In sum, it is all done for the purpose of gaining blessings for themselves. In society, everything is done for personal benefit; believing in God is solely done to gain blessings. It is for the sake of gaining blessings that people forsake everything and can withstand much suffering: This is all empirical evidence of man's corrupt nature"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The Difference Between External Changes and Changes in Disposition). **"Nothing is more difficult to address than the demands people make of God. If nothing God does conforms to your thinking, and if He does not act in accordance with your thinking, then you are likely to resist—which shows that, in nature, man opposes God. This problem must be known and resolved by pursuing the truth. Those who are without the truth make many demands of God, whereas those who truly understand the truth make none; they feel only that they have not satisfied God enough, that they do not obey God enough. That people always make demands of God reflects their corrupt nature. If you do**

not treat this as a serious problem, if you do not treat it as something important, then there will be peril and hidden dangers on your path of belief. You are able to overcome ordinary things, but when your fate, prospects, and destination are involved, you are perhaps unable to overcome. At that time, if you are still without the truth, you may well fall back upon your old ways, and will thus become one of those who are destroyed” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. People Make Too Many Demands of God).

The revelations in God’s words helped me understand that these attempts to trade with God were based on the satanic poisons of “Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost,” and “Never lift a finger without a reward.” Whatever I did, I was always thinking first of how I could benefit myself and gain blessings. Even in my duty, I’d always had my own motives and taints. Thinking back on the path I’d walked, I’d always made superficial sacrifices for God’s work, when in fact I’d been trying to exchange these small sacrifices for great blessings. To gain God’s blessings, any suffering had seemed worthwhile. But when my desires weren’t satisfied, and I got sick over and over, to where it seemed like I would die, all my misreading, blaming, resistance, and betrayal toward God was revealed. I’d done my duty in order to reach my destination. I’d been using God, cheating Him. I’d lost my conscience and reason. I’d been evil and despicable! If God’s orchestrations hadn’t repeatedly exposed me, I’d never have seen how selfish and deceitful I was. I’d treated my pursuit of blessings as appropriate, and had left God’s demands far behind. Whatever I’d done, whatever sacrifices I’d made, it didn’t matter—God would never praise this. If I didn’t pursue the truth, if my intent was still to get blessings for myself, God would detest and punish me. I’m grateful to God’s words for enlightening me, for allowing me to know myself through this sickness

and abandon my wild demands. This is God's salvation for me! The more I thought about it, the more I felt how great God's love is. I prayed to God: "God! Your good will is behind my getting cancer. My life and death are in Your hands. I will obey You, and stand witness to satisfy You."

After praying, I read a passage of God's words: **"You undergo the trials of Job, and at the same time you undergo the trials of Peter. When Job was tested, he stood witness, and in the end, Jehovah was revealed to him. Only after he stood witness was he worthy of seeing the face of God. Why is it said: 'I hide from the land of filth but show Myself to the holy kingdom'? That means that only when you are holy and stand witness can you have the dignity to see the face of God. If you cannot stand witness for Him, you do not have the dignity to see His face. If you retreat or make complaints against God in the face of refinements, thus failing to stand witness for Him and becoming Satan's laughing stock, then you will not gain the appearance of God. If you are like Job, who in the midst of trials cursed his own flesh and did not complain against God, and was able to detest his own flesh without complaining or sinning through his words, then you will be standing witness. When you undergo refinements to a certain degree and can still be like Job, utterly obedient in front of God and without other requirements of Him or your own notions, then God will appear to you"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Those Who Are to Be Made Perfect Must Undergo Refinement). God's words showed me His holiness and righteousness. God only appears to those who stand witness while being tried and refined. When God tried Job, Job's wealth, his children, his health and his happiness were all taken from him by Satan, and his body was covered in boils. But he didn't complain, or blame God. He just hated and cursed himself. Facing this great trial, he was still able to obey God's

sovereignty and extoll His name in his position as a created being. He even said: “Jehovah gave, and Jehovah has taken away” (Job 1:21). These words stood as a beautiful, resounding testimony to God in the face of Satan, and in the end, God appeared to Job. This was the value that Job’s life had. The illness I faced had come about because God was showing me special kindness. I had to obey God’s orchestrations, just as Job did. I should not be restrained by my cancer. Instead, I should turn my life over to God and bear firm and resounding testimony to God in the face of Satan, comforting God’s heart. I laid aside my concerns and surrendered myself to God’s sovereignty, and before long my condition improved. My food tasted better, I could move normally, and could even do my duty to the best of my ability. Later, my daughters took me to the hospital for a checkup. The doctor couldn’t believe what had happened. He said that patients like me were rare, and that the fact I’d survived without being treated in a hospital was nothing short of a miracle! I knew then that this was God protecting me. I could feel that my life was in God’s hands, and experienced God’s sovereignty over all things.

A while after that, my illness broke out once again. My wife and daughters took me to the hospital, and when the chief physician saw how severe my illness was, he called in a specialist to examine me. When the results of the lab test came back, the specialist told me that they lacked the equipment to treat my disease, and suggested we pay over 200,000 yuan to transfer to the provincial hospital, where they could maybe treat it. Crying, my daughter said to my wife: “Did you hear the way he said that? No one’s going to be able to treat dad. More than thirty people have caught cancer in our village these past few years, and they’ve all died ...” My wife’s face was wet with tears. I felt like a condemned man. Once again, I felt death closing in on me, and I couldn’t help but wonder: How could this disease

have come back, and still be so severe? But this time, I reproached myself. I felt remorse for my disobedience toward God. I thought of all my brushes with death, and how God had protected me and kept me alive each time. I had clearly seen God's sovereignty, so how come I didn't truly understand God? God alone had authority over life and death, not these doctors! So, I went before God and prayed. I said: "Dear God, once again, I am faced with my own death. I know Your good will is behind it. My life and death are in Your hands. I will obey You and stand witness to satisfy You!"

After I prayed, I read some of God's words: **"Who of the whole of mankind is not cared for in the eyes of the Almighty? Who does not live in the midst of the Almighty's predestination? Does man's life and death happen by his own choice? Does man control his own fate? Many people cry out for death, yet it is far away from them; many people want to be those who are strong in life and fear death, yet unbeknownst to them, the day of their demise draws near, plunging them into the abyss of death; many people look to the skies and sigh deeply; many people cry great, wailing sobs; many people fall amidst trials; and many people become prisoners of temptation. Though I do not appear in person to allow man to behold Me clearly, many people fear seeing My face, deeply afraid that I will strike them down, that I will snuff them out. Does man truly know Me, or does he not? No one can say for sure. Is this not so?"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God's Words to the Entire Universe, Chapter 11). God's words had power and authority, and gave me confidence. God is the Creator, and God controls all. As a created being, I knew I must obey the sovereignty of the Creator. If I treasured my life and blamed God, I would be resisting Him, betraying Him, and I'd be ashamed to face Him, and my life would have no meaning. When I understood all this, I no longer felt restrained by death or disease. I said to my wife and

daughters: “Don’t be sad. Even though the doctor has condemned me to death, I believe that my life and death are in God’s hands. All that God does is righteous. As long as I’m able to draw breath, I will stand and bear witness to satisfy God!” Later, I went back home to recuperate. Every day I would go before God and pray, and read God’s words. I felt calm, and at peace. The doctor gave me two boxes of serum to inject, costing less than ten yuan. I took it for a month, and the color returned to my fingers, and my appetite came back. Slowly, I started to regain my strength and vigor, until it was just as it was before I was sick. When I went back to the hospital for a checkup, the doctor said it was a miracle that I had recovered so quickly. I knew that all of this was thanks to God, that no one could have saved me besides Him. It’s like God says: **“Obviously, it is not humanity that holds the power of life and death, not some being in the natural world, but the Creator, whose authority is unique. Mankind’s life and death are not the product of some law of the natural world, but a consequence of the sovereignty of the Creator’s authority”** (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique III). I’d experienced God’s sovereignty, authority, and His miraculous deeds. I’d seen His love and salvation. From the bottom of my heart, I thanked and praised Him. When the people in the village saw me, they were all shocked. They said they hadn’t thought I would make it, that they never expected to see me again looking so healthy, and that I was really lucky to have had such a narrow escape! But I knew in my heart: This was nothing to do with luck. This was God’s power and authority. God saved me! Not long after, I resumed my duty at the church. Five years passed, and my disease never came back. This was more than I dared hope for. I truly thank God for what happened.

Through this sickness, by the revelations of God’s words and faced with the facts, I gained some insight into my wrong views in faith and

corrupt disposition, and came to know of God's sovereignty, His righteous disposition, and His beautiful essence. I abandoned my intent to get blessings, and learned how to live my most meaningful and valuable life. I'm so grateful for God's kindness!

79. Blessings Brought From Illness

By Xiao Lan, China

In 2014, the Communist Party started smearing The Church of Almighty God with the May 28 Zhaoyuan Case and arresting brothers and sisters left and right. Most of the church leaders in our area were captured and some of the brothers and sisters new to the faith were living in fear and negativity. It was at this critical time that I was promoted to be responsible for the work of several churches. I thought to myself, “Taking the helm in a time of crisis is a huge responsibility, and I can’t let God down.” So, I threw myself into my duty, facing the danger that I could be arrested at any moment. I felt that God would approve of me protecting the church’s work through such a time of danger and that I would certainly be worthy of being saved by God and of entering His kingdom. And then out of nowhere, I became seriously ill.

One evening in October of 2014, I suddenly dropped my bowl on the floor while I was eating dinner. I thought I had just dropped it out of carelessness, so I rushed to pick the bowl up and tried to get a tissue to wipe off my hands when I realized that I didn’t have control over my own hands and that I couldn’t pick up the tissue. Before long, I lost all feeling in my hands and feet and I just sat there in a chair, not able to move at all. My family took my blood pressure, which turned out to be over 200. I took some medication to reduce blood pressure, but this did nothing at all. I was so confused, and wondered, “How could this have happened? Could this be something serious?” But then I figured that I’d been putting so much into my duty over all those years of faith, so I was sure I’d receive God’s grace and that it couldn’t be anything serious. Even if I was sick, I thought God would protect me and heal me. I felt a lot calmer after that occurred to me.

When I woke up the next morning, I started gently trying to move my hands and feet and found that everything felt normal on the right side of my body, but that my left arm and leg were still numb, and I could hardly feel a thing. I tensed up right away, thinking “Why aren’t I completely better? Am I going to be partially paralyzed? If so, there’d be no way to do my duty anymore. Will I become useless and be eliminated? Will I still have a chance at salvation?” But then, I thought that what happened was so severe and that recovering halfway overnight must be a blessing from God. If God healed me, then my recovery should be a simple thing, right? I felt like I had God’s protection and that I didn’t need to worry too much.

I went to the doctor that morning, and after a CT scan, the doctor said with a grave look on his face, “You had a right-side intracranial hemorrhage with about 10 ml of blood. If the site of bleeding had been just a little higher, that would have been the locus for speech. You would have lost your ability to speak, and probably would have become a vegetable. Seeing as how this happened last night, you’re incredibly lucky that you’ve made it this far. You need treatment immediately.” He went on to say that they’d start with an infusion and approach treatment conservatively and that if the blood clots in my brain didn’t dissolve, they’d have to do brain surgery. My mind went totally blank at the mention of brain hemorrhage. I’d never dared to imagine that it could be something so serious. “I’m not even 50 years old,” I thought to myself, “if the treatment isn’t successful and I stay partially paralyzed, or become a fully paralyzed zombie, what kind of a terrible life will that be? And brain surgery is so risky, it could even cost me my life. Then could I still be saved and get into God’s kingdom? I’ve been giving my all over my years of faith, so why do I have such a serious health problem? Why isn’t God protecting me?” I got more upset the more I thought about it and couldn’t even get lunch down. Around my fifth day in

the hospital, an old woman in the bed next to mine suddenly got a lot worse and had to be transferred to another hospital. Seeing this made me nervous again, and I thought, “We were admitted on the same day, and she was walking all around, but now they’re wheeling her out. It seems like you can’t tell if someone will survive something like this or not. Will I suddenly take a turn for the worse, too?”

Even after nearly a week in the hospital, I still didn’t have any real feeling in my left leg. I thought, “Why isn’t God looking out for me? I can’t do my duty at such a critical time, have I lost my chance at salvation?” This thought sent a real chill through my heart, and I started crying and couldn’t stop. I’d worked so hard over my nine years of faith, never letting anything stand in my way. I had never hesitated to take on any kind of difficulty or problem that arose in the church, and I didn’t shrink back even when I was facing the real danger of being arrested. I always kept doing my duty. Over my years as a leader, I’d suffered more and put more into my duty than the other brothers and sisters. I thought that by giving so much, and with that kind of sacrifice, God should bless me. How could I have gotten so seriously ill so suddenly? How had God not protected me? If I didn’t get better and I couldn’t take on a duty, could I still be saved? If not, then were all those years of sacrifice and hard work in vain? I felt like I wouldn’t have put in so much if I’d known this would happen. I was feeling more miserable the more I thought about it. I didn’t even want to pray or ponder God’s words anymore. I was feeling really agitated, and without realizing it I put my arm receiving the infusion under my head, dislodging the needle, which made my hand swell up. Seeing my swollen hand left me feeling miserable. I thought about the brothers and sisters out there bursting with energy, sharing the gospel and doing their duty, while I was just lying in the hospital, not able to do any duty at all. Wasn’t I utterly useless? And with it

being the time to spread the kingdom gospel, the others were all able to perform their duty and do good deeds while I would probably be eliminated. I felt like I wasn't going to be saved by God after all. That night, I was tossing and turning in bed, and couldn't sleep at all. Totally lost in my misery, I came before God in tears and prayed: "Oh God, I'm really suffering right now. I know that You have allowed this to happen to me and I shouldn't misunderstand You. Please guide me to understand Your will, so I can submit to Your rule and arrangements."

While I was in the hospital, a sister sent me an MP5 player, and when everyone else was asleep, I put in my earphones and listened to God's words. One of the passages was incredibly helpful for me. God's words say, **"For all people, refinement is excruciating, and very difficult to accept—yet it is during refinement that God makes plain His righteous disposition to man, and makes public His requirements for man, and provides more enlightenment, and more actual pruning and dealing; through the contrast between facts and the truth, He helps man know himself better, and gives man a greater understanding of the truth and God's will, thus allowing man to have a truer and purer love of God. Such are God's aims in carrying out refinement. All the work that God does in man has its own aims and significance; God does not do work that is meaningless or unbeneficial to man. Refinement does not mean removing people from before God, and nor does it mean destroying them in hell. Rather, it means changing man's disposition during refinement, changing his intentions, his old views, changing his love for God, and changing his whole life. Refinement is a real test of man, and a form of real training, and only during refinement can his love serve its inherent function"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Only by Experiencing Refinement Can Man Possess True Love). As I thought this over, I realized

that when God tests and refines people, it's not to eliminate them, but to purify and transform them. But I wasn't seeking God's will or trying to understand His work. Since my stroke, I'd just been misunderstanding and blaming God. I'd been so foolish! So I said a prayer to God. I was willing to submit, read God's words to reflect and know myself, and learn a lesson.

I read this in God's word, **"The saddest thing about mankind's belief in God is that man conducts his own management amidst the work of God and yet pays no heed to God's management. Man's biggest failure lies in how, at the same time as seeking to submit to God and worship Him, man is constructing his own ideal destination and plotting how to receive the greatest blessing and the best destination. Even if one understands how pitiable, detestable, and pathetic they are, how many can readily abandon their ideals and hopes? Who can halt their own steps and not think only of themselves? God needs those who work closely with Him to complete His management, those who submit to Him, devoting body and mind to the work of His management, not those who hold out hands to beg from Him every day, much less those who give a little and then wait to be rewarded. God despises those who give a trifle then rest on their laurels, those cold-blooded ones who resent His management work and only wish to speak of going to heaven, being blessed. He loathes even more those who exploit the opportunity of His work of salvation. That's because these people have never cared about what God wants to achieve and gain through His management work. Their only care is how to use the opportunity of God's work to gain blessings. They care not about God's heart, but think only of their prospects and fate. Those who resent the work of God's management and lack even the slightest interest in how God saves mankind and His will do just what pleases themselves, detached**

from God’s management work. Their behavior is neither remembered nor approved of by God—much less is it favorably looked upon by God” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Appendix 3: Man Can Only Be Saved Amidst God’s Management). God’s words revealed exactly the state I was in. When I first became a believer, I saw what God promised to man and I thought that as long as we work hard and make sacrifices for God, and pursue the truth, we can be saved and get into God’s kingdom. So I threw myself wholeheartedly into my duty, through any adverse conditions that came my way. When other brothers and sisters had difficulties, I’d rush to support and help them. I even kept doing my duty when I was facing the very real danger of arrest. I thought that this kind of sacrifice would certainly earn me God’s protection and blessings, and that I’d have a place in the kingdom of heaven. When I got sick and I was facing the possibility of being partially paralyzed, I felt like God hadn’t protected or blessed me and that I’d lost my chance at a good future and destination. I was filled with complaints, I misunderstood and conflicted with God and even wanted to settle accounts, calculating everything I’d done. With all of the effort I had put in, I was reasoning with God, arguing with Him, crying out against Him. Was I not precisely what God meant when He said **“those who give a little and then wait to be rewarded”** and **“those who give a trifle then rest on their laurels”**? In the face of major illness, my hidden motive to gain blessings and the transactional perspective lying behind my sacrifices in my faith all came to the fore. I wasn’t doing my duty to gain the truth and cast off corruption, rather, I had been wanting to use superficial sacrifices in exchange for God’s grace and blessings, in exchange for the blessings of the kingdom. I was doing deals with God, using Him and cheating Him. How could an opportunist like me be worthy of heavenly kingdom? If it hadn’t been for that stroke, I would have been completely fooled by all of my

superficial efforts and I never would have recognized my despicable motives to pursue blessings, or the adulteration in my faith. I would have kept resisting God in my faith, without any idea of what I was doing.

I kept on reflecting to myself after that, and on why I was always trying to do deals with God in my duty. I read this in God's words in my seeking: **"All corrupt humans live for themselves. Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost—this is the summation of human nature. People's faith is self-serving; they give things up, expend themselves for God, are devoted to Him, but all for themselves. In sum, all is to gain blessings themselves. In the world, all is for personal gain; faith is merely for blessings reaped. People forsake all and bear much suffering for the sake of gaining blessings: This is all empirical evidence of man's corrupt nature"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The Difference Between External Changes and Changes in Disposition). God's words showed me the root of my transactional attitude in my faith. Sayings like "Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost," and "Never lift a finger without a reward" were satanic ideas that had rooted themselves deep in my heart and had become laws of survival for me. In everything I did, my personal benefit was first and foremost, so I felt I should be rewarded for what I contributed. Even in my work for God, I was just trying to do a deal with Him and I thought that gaining blessings in my faith was perfectly natural. When I had a stroke after having worked so hard and made so many sacrifices, and I realized I could die at any moment, and that I lost all hope of being saved, of having a good outcome and destination, so I immediately stood against God and blamed Him. I was calculating everything I'd done, arguing with God, going up against Him. I was living by Satan's poisons, without any kind of human likeness at all. If I didn't repent, I'd be eliminated and punished sooner or later.

There were a couple more passages of God's words that I read later on that gave me an understanding of the mistaken perspective on pursuit in my faith. Almighty God says, **"When man measures others, he does so according to their contribution. When God measures man, He does so according to man's nature. Among those who seek life, Paul was someone who did not know his own substance. He was by no means humble or obedient, nor did he know his essence, which was in opposition to God. And so, he was someone who had not undergone detailed experiences, and was someone who did not put the truth into practice. Peter was different. He knew his imperfections, weaknesses, and his corrupt disposition as a creature of God, and so he had a path of practice through which to change his disposition; he was not one of those who only had doctrine but possessed no reality. Those who change are new people who have been saved, they are those who are qualified in pursuing the truth. People who do not change belong to those who are naturally obsolete; they are those who have not been saved, that is, those who are detested and rejected by God. They will not be remembered by God no matter how great their work. When you compare this with your own pursuit, whether you are ultimately the same kind of person as Peter or Paul should be self-evident"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Success or Failure Depends on the Path That Man Walks).

"If what you seek is the truth, if what you put into practice is the truth, and if what you attain is a change in your disposition, then the path that you tread is the right one. If what you seek is the blessings of the flesh, and what you put into practice is the truth of your own notions, and if there is no change in your disposition, and you are not at all obedient to God in the flesh, and you still live in vagueness, then what you seek will surely take you to hell, for the path that you walk is the

path of failure. Whether you will be made perfect or eliminated depends on your own pursuit, which is also to say that success or failure depends on the path that man walks” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Success or Failure Depends on the Path That Man Walks). When I gave this more thought, it was really enlightening for me. When God measures a person, it’s not based on what they’ve contributed on the surface, rather, this measurement is based on their attitude, perspective, and stance in the face of things, and whether they can put the truth into practice and submit to God. But I thought that as long as someone made sacrifices and worked hard, God would rejoice in this and bless them, then they’d have a good destination. Wasn’t that clearly contrary to God’s words? In the Age of Grace, Paul went to most of Europe sharing the gospel of the Lord. He suffered plenty, completed a lot of work, and established many churches. But everything he did wasn’t out of submission to God or to do the duty of a created being at all. It was so that he would personally be blessed and rewarded. That’s why, after so much traveling and so much hard work, he said, “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: From now on there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness” (2 Timothy 4:7–8). Paul was blatantly demanding a crown from God. His sacrifices weren’t sincere and they didn’t come from submission to God. In the end, not only did he not get into the kingdom, but he was punished. In my faith, I wasn’t looking at things from the truth and God’s words, but I was measuring God’s work according to Satan’s logic and with a transactional attitude. That was totally ridiculous of me. God’s words say, **“If what you seek is the truth, if what you put into practice is the truth, and if what you attain is a change in your disposition, then the path that you tread is the right one”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Success or Failure Depends on the Path That Man Walks). I realized that I had to pursue

the truth and focus on knowing myself through the process of doing my duty, to address my wrong perspectives, my wrong motives and my corrupt disposition, achieve obedience to God, and do my duty out of consideration for God's will and nothing else. That is the only way to be saved by God. Once I realized all of this, I said a prayer: "No matter what happens with my health, I'm ready to submit. If I live and get out of the hospital, I'll do my duty to repay God's love down to my last breath!"

On my 12th day in the hospital, I asked if I could be checked for possible discharge from the hospital, and after an exam, the doctor said, "The hemorrhage has stopped, but the blood clots haven't totally dissolved. This is looking really good for just 12 days of treatment." I was thrilled to hear this, and I gave thanks to God for protecting me. The doctor also told me that when I got out of the hospital, I needed to focus on my recovery and not wear myself out, and that my cerebral blood vessels were really fragile, so I had to be sure not to fall, otherwise, the consequences of a second stroke would be absolutely terrible. The day I got back home, I got a message saying that Sister Zhang, a sister I worked with, had gone out four days ago but still hadn't returned to her host's house. It was very likely that she had been arrested. Hearing this was really concerning. It meant the gathering places she'd been to and the homes where the church offerings were kept were all in danger, so they had to be notified to take precautions right away. But that included a lot of places, and having just gotten out of the hospital, I couldn't physically handle all that jostling around. Why couldn't this have happened before this, or after this? Why did it have to happen at such a critical juncture? If I were to have another stroke, it might even leave me unable to stand, and going out to notify all those people was really dangerous. If I were arrested, could I physically withstand the police's brutal torture? It would probably be the end of me. But only Sister

Zhang and I knew where these brothers and sisters lived, so if I didn't go tell them and they ended up getting arrested, and the offerings being taken by the police, it would be a terrible loss. Conflicted, I thought of the prayer I'd made before getting out of the hospital, "If I live to get out of the hospital, I will devote myself to my duty and repay God's love down to my last breath." Now that something was happening, how could I forget about my promise just like that? I prostrated myself before God and prayed, "God, I know You are observing me, seeing what attitude I have. I am willing to uphold the work of God's house and do my duty." I also thought about what happened when the Lord Jesus was nailed to the cross, which was really moving for me. The Lord Jesus went to the site of His crucifixion without ever looking back, all to redeem mankind, and suffered unimaginable pain and humiliation. God's love for mankind is so great. He gave up His life for us, so why couldn't I let go of my personal interests and protect the work of God's house to repay God's love? As a created being, I couldn't just enjoy God's grace and think of nothing but my own blessings. If I didn't do my duty, I wasn't even worthy of being called human. Encouraged by God's words, I started making arrangements to take care of matters. Just as I was on my way to the second host's home, I found out that Sister Zhang hadn't actually been arrested. I was so grateful to God. I also felt much more at peace, because I'd been able to correct my motives and perspectives and put the truth into practice.

These six years have gone by really fast. I'm not entirely better, my left hand and foot still have some numbness, but I know that my health is in God's hands. Not recovering fully serves as a protection for me, a reminder not to make my efforts about getting blessings, not to end up on the wrong path like Paul. I've suffered through all of this, but it's helped me understand my corruption and adulterations better and correct my mistaken

perspectives on being blessed. I've understood that in my faith, I should be pursuing the truth and submitting to God, and doing the duty of a created being. I have the right aim in my pursuit now—this illness has been a blessing in disguise! I never could have gained all of this in a comfortable environment. Thank God for His salvation!

80. Spending the Prime of Youth in Prison

By Chenxi, China

Everyone says the prime of our youth is the most splendid and purest time of life. Perhaps for many, those years are full of beautiful memories, but what I never would have expected was that I spent the prime of my own youth in the labor camp. You might think me strange for this, but I do not regret it. Even though that time behind bars was full of bitterness and tears, it was the most precious gift of my life, and I gained a great deal from it.

One day in April of 2002, I was staying at a sister's home when the arrest happened. At 1 a.m. in the morning, we were suddenly awakened by some loud, urgent bangs on the door. We heard someone outside yelling, "Open the door! Open the door!" No sooner had the sister opened it than several police officers abruptly pushed the door open and swarmed inside, saying aggressively, "We're from the Public Security Bureau." Hearing these three words, "Public Security Bureau," made me immediately nervous. Were they here to arrest us for our belief in God? I had heard about some brothers and sisters being arrested and persecuted over their faith; could it be that this was now happening to me? Just then my heart began to beat wildly, and in my panic, I didn't know what to do. I therefore hurriedly prayed to God: "God, I implore You to be with me. Give me faith and courage. No matter what happens, I will always be willing to stand witness for You. I also beseech You to give me Your wisdom and grant me with the words I should say, and please keep me from betraying You and from selling out my brothers and sisters." After praying, my heart gradually calmed down. I saw the four or five evil policemen rifling through the place like bandits, searching through the bedding, through each cabinet and box, and even what was under the bed until finally they came up with some

books of God's words as well as some CDs of hymns. Then they took us to the police station. When we got to the office, several burly officers came in after us and stood to my left and right. The chief of the group of evil policemen bellowed at me, "What are you called? Where are you from? How many of you are there altogether?" I had just opened my mouth and was in the middle of responding when he lunged at me and slapped me twice in the face. I was stunned into silence. I wondered to myself, "Why did you hit me? I didn't even finish answering. Why are you being so rough and uncivilized, completely different from what I'd imagined the People's Police to be like?" Next, he went on to ask me how old I was, and when I answered honestly that I was seventeen, he twice smacked my face again and scolded me for telling lies. After that, no matter what I said, he indiscriminately delivered slap after slap to my face to the point where my face was on fire with pain. I recalled having heard my brothers and sisters say that trying to reason with these vicious policemen wouldn't work. Having experienced this for myself, from then on I didn't utter a word no matter what they asked. When they saw that I wasn't talking, they screamed at me, "You bitch! I'll give you something to think about, otherwise you won't give us a truthful account!" As this was said, one of them punched me fiercely two times in the chest, causing me to stagger and fall heavily to the floor. He then kicked me hard a couple of times, pulled me back up from the floor, and yelled at me to kneel down. I did not obey, so he kicked me a few times in the knees. The wave of intense pain that swept over me forced me to fall to my knees on the floor with a thump. He grabbed me by the hair and pulled downward forcefully, and then suddenly yanked my head backward, forcing me to look up. He cursed at me while slapping my face a couple more times, and my only sensation was that the world was spinning. Presently, I fell to the floor. Just then, the head of the evil police

suddenly spotted the watch on my wrist. Staring at it covetously, he shouted, “What are you wearing there?” Right away, one of the policemen grabbed my wrist and forcefully pulled the watch off it, then gave it to his “master.” One of the vicious policemen grabbed me by the collar as if he were picking up a little chicken, and raised me up from the floor to roar at me, “Oh, you’re so tough, aren’t you? This is what you get for staying quiet!” As he said this, he hit me fiercely a couple more times, and I again was beaten to the floor. By then my whole body was aching unbearably, and I no longer had any strength to struggle. I just lay on the floor with my eyes closed, not moving. In my heart, I urgently supplicated to God: “O God, I don’t know what further savage acts this gang of evil policemen is going to do to me. You know I am small in stature, and that I am physically weak. I implore You to protect me. I would rather die than be a Judas and betray You.” After my prayer, God gave me faith and strength. I would sooner die than be a Judas by betraying God and selling out my brothers and sisters. I would resolutely stand witness for God. Just then, I heard someone next to me say, “How come she’s not moving anymore? Is she dead?” After that, someone deliberately stepped on my hand and pressed down hard on it with his foot while bellowing ferociously, “Get up! We’re gonna take you somewhere else.”

Later, I was escorted to the County Public Security Bureau. When we got to the interrogation room, the head of those evil policemen and two others surrounded me and questioned me repeatedly, pacing back and forth in front of me and trying to force me to sell out my church’s leaders and my brothers and sisters. When they saw that I still wasn’t going to give them the answers they wanted to hear, the three of them took turns slapping me in the face over and over. I don’t know how many times I was hit; all I could hear was the smacking sound as they hit my face, a sound that seemed to

ring out against the quiet of the dead of night. Their hands now sore, the evil police began to hit me with books. They beat me until I finally couldn't even feel the pain anymore; my face just felt swollen and numb. In the end, seeing that they weren't going to get any valuable information out of me, the vicious policemen took out a contact book and, pleased with themselves, said, "We found this in your bag. Even if you won't tell us anything, we still have another trick up our sleeve!" Suddenly, I felt extremely anxious: If any of my brothers or sisters answered the phone, it could lead to their being arrested. It could also implicate the church, and the consequences could be disastrous. Just then, I recalled a passage of God's words: **"Of everything that occurs in the universe, there is nothing in which I do not have the final say. Is there anything that is not in My hands?"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God's Words to the Entire Universe, Chapter 1). "That's right," I thought to myself. "All things and events are orchestrated and arranged in God's hands. Even whether or not a phone call goes through is entirely up to God to decide. I am willing to look up to and rely upon God and submit to His orchestrations." I therefore repeatedly prayed to God, imploring Him to protect these brothers and sisters. As a result, they dialed through those phone numbers, and some of the calls rang out without anyone answering while others could not get through at all. In the end, spitting curses in frustration, the evil cops tossed the contact book on the table and stopped trying. I could not help but express my thanks and praise to God.

Nevertheless, they had not given up, and continued to interrogate me about the church's affairs. I did not answer. Flustered and exasperated, they came up with an even more despicable move to try to make me suffer: One of the evil policemen forced me to maintain a half squat position, and I had to hold my arms out level with my shoulders and was not allowed to move

at all. Before long, my legs began to tremble and I couldn't hold my arms out straight anymore, and my body involuntarily began to stand back up. The policeman took an iron bar and glared at me like a tiger eyeing its prey. No sooner had I stood up than he brutally beat me on the legs, causing so much pain that I nearly fell back onto my knees. Over the next half hour, whenever my legs or arms moved even the slightest bit, he would immediately beat me with the bar. I don't know how many times he hit me. Due to having maintained this half squat position for such a long time, both of my legs grew extremely swollen, and they hurt unbearably as though they had fractured. As time went by, my legs were shaking even harder and my teeth were chattering continuously. Just then, it felt like my strength was going to give out. However, the evil police just mocked and ridiculed me, constantly sneering and laughing nastily at me, like people cruelly trying to get a monkey to do tricks. The more I looked at their ugly, despicable faces, the more hatred I felt for these evil policemen. I recalled God's words, **"When people are ready to sacrifice their lives, everything becomes trifling, and no one can get the better of them. What could be more important than life? Thus, Satan becomes incapable of doing any more in people, there is nothing it can do with man"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Interpretations of the Mysteries of "God's Words to the Entire Universe", Chapter 36). So I suddenly stood and said to them in a loud voice, "I will not squat anymore. Go ahead and sentence me to death! Today I have nothing to lose! I am not even afraid to die, so how could I be scared of you? Such big men you are, yet all you seem to know how to do is bully a little girl like me!" To my surprise, after I said this, the group of evil police shouted a few more curse words and then stopped interrogating me.

This pack of evil policemen had tormented me most of the night; by the time they stopped, it was daylight. They had me sign my name and said

they were going to detain me. After that, an elderly policeman, feigning kindness, said to me, “Miss, look, you are so young—in the flower of your youth—so it is best if you hurry up and tell us all you know. I guarantee that I will make them release you. If you have any trouble, do not hesitate to tell me. Look, your face has swollen up like a loaf of bread. Haven’t you suffered enough?” Hearing him speak in this way, I knew he was just trying to lure me into making some sort of confession. I also recalled something my brothers and sisters had said during meetings: In order to get what they wanted, the evil police will use both carrot and stick and resort to all manner of tricks to deceive people. Thinking of this, I replied to the elderly policeman, “Don’t act like you are a good person; you’re all part of the same group. What do you want me to confess? What you’re doing is called extorting a confession. This is illegal punishment!” Hearing this, he put on an innocent expression and argued, “But I haven’t hit you once. They are the ones who hit you.” I was grateful for God’s guidance and protection, which allowed me to once again prevail over Satan’s temptation.

After leaving the County Public Security Bureau, straight away they locked me up in the detention house. As soon as we walked in the front gate, I saw the place was surrounded by very tall walls with electrified concertina wire on top of them, and in each of the four corners was what looked like a sentry tower, within which armed policemen stood guard. It all felt very sinister and terrible. After passing through iron gate after iron gate, I arrived at the cell. When I saw the dilapidated, linen-covered quilts atop the freezing cold kang bed, which were both dark and dirty, and smelled the pungent, foul scent coming from them, I could not help but feel a wave of disgust pass through me. At mealtime, each prisoner was only given a small steamed bun that was sour and half-raw. Even though I had been tortured by the police for half a night and not eaten anything, seeing

this food really made me lose my appetite. On top of that, my face was so swollen from being beaten by the police, and it felt taut as though wrapped in tape. It hurt even just opening my mouth to talk, let alone to eat. Under these circumstances, I was in a very gloomy mood and felt much wronged. The thought that I would actually have to stay here and endure such an inhuman existence made me so emotional that I involuntarily shed some tears. The sister who was arrested together fellowshiped God's words with me, and I understood that God had allowed this environment to befall me, and this was Him trialing and testing me to see if I could stand witness. He was also using this opportunity to perfect my faith. Realizing this, I stopped feeling wronged, and within me I began to resolve myself to endure my hardship.

Two weeks went by, and the head of those evil policemen again came to interrogate me. Seeing me remain calm and composed, without any fear at all, he shouted my name and yelled, "Tell me truthfully: Where else have you been arrested before? This is certainly not your first time inside; otherwise, how could you act so calm and seasoned, as if you're not afraid in the least?" When I heard him say this, I could not help but thank and praise God in my heart. God had protected me and given me courage, thus allowing me to face these evil policemen with complete fearlessness. Just then, anger welled up from within my heart: You are abusing your power by persecuting people for their religious beliefs, and you arrest, bully, and injure those who believe in God without reason. You abide by no law, neither earthly nor heavenly. I believe in God and I walk the right path, and I have not broken the law. Why should I be afraid of you? I will not succumb to the evil forces of your gang! I then retorted, "Do you think everywhere else is so boring that I'd actually want to come here? You have wronged me and pushed me around! Any further efforts of yours to extort a

confession or frame me will be useless!” Upon hearing this, he grew so angry that smoke seemed about to billow out of his ears. He screamed, “You’re too goddamned stubborn to tell us anything. You won’t talk, will you? I’m going to give you a three-year sentence, and then we’ll see whether you start behaving. I dare you to keep being stubborn!” By then I felt beyond indignant. In a loud voice I replied, “I’m still young, so what is three years to me? I’ll be out of prison in the blink of an eye.” In his anger, the evil policeman stood abruptly and growled at his lackeys, “I quit. You go ahead and interrogate her.” He then left, slamming the door behind him. Seeing what had happened, the two policemen did not question me any further; they just finished writing a statement for me to sign and then walked out. Seeing how defeated the evil police looked made me very happy, and in my heart I praised God’s victory over Satan. During the second round of interrogation, they switched tactics. As soon as they walked in the door, they pretended to be concerned about me: “You’ve been in here for so long. How come none of your family members have come to see you? They must have given up on you. How about you give them a call yourself and ask them to come visit you?” Hearing this made me feel sick at heart and upset. I felt lonely and helpless. I was homesick and missed my parents, and my desire for freedom was growing more and more intense. Involuntarily, my eyes brimmed with tears, but I didn’t want to cry in front of this gang of evil policemen. Silently, I prayed to God: “O God, right now I feel so miserable and in pain, and I feel very helpless. Please help me. I do not want to let Satan see my weakness. However, right now I cannot grasp Your will. I beg You to enlighten and guide me.” After praying, an idea suddenly flashed through my mind: This was Satan’s cunning ruse; their trying to make me contact my family might well have been a trick to get them to bring ransom money, thus achieving their goal of raking in some

money; or perhaps they might have known that my family members all believed in God and had wanted to use this opportunity to arrest them. These evil policemen really were full of schemes. Had it not been for God's enlightenment, I might have telephoned home. Would I not then have indirectly been a Judas? So, I secretly declared to Satan: "Vile devil, I simply will not allow you to succeed in your deception." I then said nonchalantly, "I don't know why my family members haven't come to see me. I don't care no matter what you do to me!" The evil police had no more cards to play. After that, they didn't interrogate me again.

A month went by. One day, my uncle suddenly came to visit me, saying he was trying to get me out of there, and that I should be released a few days later. When I walked out of the visitation room, I felt extremely happy. I thought I would finally be able to see the light of day again, as well as my brothers, sisters, and loved ones. So I started daydreaming and looking forward to my uncle coming to get me. Every day, I kept my ears open for the sound of the guards' calling to me that it was time to leave. Sure enough, a week later, a guard did come calling, and my heart felt about to beat right out of my chest. I joyously arrived at the visitation room. However, when I saw my uncle, he hung his head down. It was a long time before he said in a dispirited tone, "They've already finalized your case. You've been sentenced to three years." When I heard this, I was stunned and my mind went completely blank. I fought back the tears, and managed to keep from crying. It was like I couldn't hear anything my uncle said after that. I walked out of the visitation room in a trance, my feet feeling as though they were filled with lead, with each step heavier than the one before. I had no recollection of how I walked back to my cell. When I got there, I collapsed to the floor. I thought to myself, "Each day of the past month or so of this inhuman existence has felt like a year; how will I be

able to make it through three long years of this?” The more I dwelled on it, the more my anguish grew, and the more indistinct and unfathomable my future began to seem. Unable to keep them back any longer, I burst into tears. I’d thought that as a minor I would never be sentenced, or at most would only be locked up for a few months. I’d thought I’d just have to endure a little more pain and hardship and stick it out a bit longer, and then it would be over; it had never even occurred to me that I might actually have to spend three years in prison. In my grief, I again came before God. I opened up to Him, saying, “O God, I know that all things and all events are in Your hands, but right now my heart feels like it’s been completely hollowed out. I feel like I’m about to fall apart; I think it’s going to be very difficult for me to endure three years of suffering in prison. O God, I beg You to reveal Your will to me, and I implore You to grant me faith and strength so that I can completely submit to You and bravely accept what has befallen me.” After this prayer, I thought of God’s words: **“During these last days you must bear testimony to God. No matter how great your suffering, you should walk until the very end, and even at your last breath, still you must be faithful to God and at the mercy of God; only this is truly loving God, and only this is the strong and resounding testimony”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Only by Experiencing Painful Trials Can You Know the Loveliness of God). God’s words gave me faith and strength and I was willing to submit. Regardless of what might befall me or how much suffering I might undergo, I wouldn’t blame God at all; I would stand witness for Him. Two months later, I was transported to a labor camp. When I received my verdict papers and signed them, I discovered that the three-year sentence had been commuted to one year. In my heart I thanked and praised God over and over. God was orchestrating all of this, and within it I could see the immense love and protection He had for me.

In the labor camp, I saw an even meaner and more brutal side of the evil police. Very early in the morning we would get up and go to work, and we were severely overloaded with tasks to do each day. We had to labor for very long hours every day, and sometimes would work around the clock for several days and nights in a row. Some of the prisoners got sick and needed to be hooked up to an IV, and the drip rate was turned up to the fastest notch so that, as soon as it was finished, they could quickly return to the workshop and get back to work. This led to the majority of convicts subsequently getting some illnesses that were very difficult to cure. Because they worked slowly, some people were frequently subjected to verbal abuse from the guards, their foul language simply unbearable to hear. Some people violated the rules while working, so were punished. For example, they were “put on the rope,” which meant they had to kneel on the ground and have their hands tied behind their backs, their arms forcibly raised up painfully to neck level. Others were tied to trees with iron chains like dogs and were flogged mercilessly with a whip. Some people, unable to bear this inhuman torture, would try to starve themselves to death, only to have the evil guards put cuffs on both their ankles and wrists and then hold their bodies down tightly, forcing feeding tubes and fluids into them. They were afraid these prisoners might die, not because they cherished life, but because they were worried about losing the cheap labor they provided. The evil deeds committed by the prison guards really were too many to count, as were the horrendously violent and bloody incidents that occurred. This all made me see very clearly that the Chinese Communist Party government is the earthly embodiment of Satan who dwells in the spiritual world; it is the evilest of all devils and the prisons under its regime are hell on earth—not just in name, but in reality. I remember the words on the wall of the office in which I was interrogated: “It is forbidden to beat people arbitrarily or

subject them to illegal punishment, and it is even more forbidden to obtain confessions through torture.” Nevertheless, in reality, their actions were in open defiance of these rules. They had wantonly beaten me, a girl who was not even an adult yet, and subjected me to illegal punishment; what’s more, they had sentenced me merely because of my belief in God. All of this had enabled me to see clearly the tricks used by the CCP government to hoodwink people while presenting a false appearance of peace and prosperity. It was just as God had said: **“The devil tightly trusses all of man’s body, it puts out both his eyes, and seals his lips firmly shut. The king of devils has rampaged for several thousand years, right up until today, when it still keeps a close watch on the ghost town, as if it were an impenetrable palace of demons; this pack of watchdogs, meanwhile, stare with glaring eyes, deeply fearful that God will catch them unawares and wipe them all out, leaving them without a place of peace and happiness. How could the people of a ghost town such as this ever have seen God? Have they ever enjoyed the dearness and loveliness of God? What appreciation have they of the matters of the human world? Who of them can understand God’s eager will? Small wonder, then, that God incarnate remains completely hidden: In a dark society such as this, where the demons are merciless and inhumane, how could the king of devils, who kills people without batting an eye, tolerate the existence of a God who is lovely, kind, and also holy? How could it applaud and cheer the arrival of God? These lackeys! They repay kindness with hate, they have long since disdained God, they abuse God, they are savage in the extreme, they have not the slightest regard for God, they plunder and pillage, they have lost all conscience, they go against all conscience, and they tempt the innocent into senselessness. Forefathers of the ancient? Beloved leaders? They all oppose God!**

Their meddling has left all beneath heaven in a state of darkness and chaos! Religious freedom? The legitimate rights and interests of citizens? They are all tricks for covering up sin!” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Work and Entry (8)).

After experiencing the evil policemen’s persecution, I was utterly convinced of this passage of words spoken by God, and now had some real knowledge and experience of it: The CCP government is truly a demonic legion that hates and opposes God, and that advocates evil and violence, and living under the suppression of the satanic regime is no different from living in a human hell. At the same time, in the labor camp, I had seen with my own eyes the ugliness of all kinds of people: the repulsive faces of those smooth-talking opportunistic snakes who curried favor with the head guards, the devilish faces of ferociously violent people who ran amuck bullying the weak, and so on. For me, who had not yet begun life as an adult, during this year of life in prison, I finally saw clearly the corruption of humanity. I witnessed the treachery in people’s hearts, and realized how sinister the human world could be. I also learned to distinguish between positive and negative, black and white, right and wrong, good and evil, and between what is great and what is despicable; I saw clearly that Satan is ugly, evil, brutal, and that only God is the symbol of holiness and righteousness. Only God symbolizes beauty and goodness; only God is love and salvation. Watched over and safeguarded by God, that unforgettable year passed very quickly for me. Now, looking back on it, I see that although I underwent some physical suffering during that year of prison life, God used His words to lead and guide me, thus enabling my life to mature. This suffering and trial is God’s special blessing for me. Thanks be to Almighty God!

81. Sufferings Are God's Blessings

By Wang Gang, China

One afternoon in the winter of 2008, when two sisters and I were testifying of God's work in the last days to a gospel target, we were reported by evil people. Six police officers used the excuse of needing to check our residence permits to charge into the home of the gospel target. As they came in the door, they roared: "Don't move!" Two of the police officers seemed completely out of their minds as they pounced on me; one of them grabbed the clothes on my chest and the other grabbed my arms and used all his strength to cinch them behind me, then he fiercely asked: "What are you doing? What is your name? Where are you from?" I asked in reply: "What are you doing? What are you arresting me for?" When they heard me say this, they got really angry and aggressively said: "It doesn't matter what the reason is, you are the one we are looking for and you're coming with us!" Afterward, the police officers took me and the two sisters and pushed us into the police vehicle.

After we got to the Public Security Bureau, the police officers took me and locked me up in a small room; they ordered me to crouch on the floor and arranged four of them to watch me. Because I had squatted for a long time, I became so tired that I couldn't take it. The instant I tried to stand up, they scuttled over and pressed my head down to prevent me from standing up. Not long after, I heard blood-curdling screams of someone being tortured in the room next door, and at that moment, I became very afraid: I don't know what torture they will use on me next! I began urgently praying to God in my heart: "Oh Almighty God, I am very afraid right now, please give me faith and power, and make me firm and courageous. I'm willing to stand testimony for You. If I can't bear their cruel torture, I would rather

commit suicide by biting off my tongue than ever betray You like Judas!” After praying, I felt strength rise up inside me, and my fear subsided.

That evening after 7 p.m., they handcuffed my arms behind my back, took me to the interrogation room upstairs and shoved me to the floor. There were all kinds of torture instruments such as ropes, wooden sticks, batons, whips, etc. A policeman held an electric baton in his hands, which made wild zapping and popping noises, and he made threatening demands for information: “How many people are in your church? Where is your meeting location? Who is in charge? How many people are in the area preaching the gospel? Speak up! Otherwise, you will get what’s coming!” I looked at the looming danger of the electric baton and looked again at the room filled with torture instruments; I couldn’t help but feel nervous and afraid. I didn’t know if I would be able to overcome this torture, so I kept calling out to God. Seeing I didn’t say anything, he became flustered and violently jabbed me on the left side of my chest with the electric baton. He shocked me for nearly a minute. I immediately felt like the blood in my body had been boiled; I was in unbearable pain from head to foot and I rolled around on the floor screaming incessantly. He still wouldn’t give up on me and suddenly he started dragging me up and used a baton to lift my head up by my chin, yelling: “Speak up! You won’t confess anything?” In facing the insane torture of these demons, I only feared that I would not be able to bear their torture and would thus betray God, and so I desperately prayed to God in my heart. At this time, I thought about God’s words, **“Those in power may seem vicious from the outside, but do not be afraid, for this is because you have little faith. As long as your faith grows, nothing will be too difficult”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 75). God’s words gave me faith and power again, and I recognized that even though the evil police officers in

front of me were crazed and unbridled, they were arranged by the hand of God. Without God's permission, they couldn't kill me. As long as I leaned on faith and relied on God and didn't give in to them, they would inevitably fail in humiliation. In thinking about this, I summoned all the strength of my body and replied in a loud voice: "Why have you brought me here? Why are you electrocuting me with an electric baton? What crime have I committed?" The evil policeman suddenly became like a deer in the headlights and weighed down with a guilty conscience. He stuttered and couldn't say anything. Then they left with their tails between their legs. In seeing the disgraceful situation of Satan's dilemma, I was moved to tears. In this predicament, I truly experienced the power and authority of Almighty God's words. As long as I put God's word into practice, then I would see God's deeds. Two police officers came in five or six minutes later, but this time they tried another tactic. A skinny officer said to me really warmly, "Just play nice for a bit. Answer our questions, otherwise we won't be able to let you go." I didn't say a word, so he brought over a piece of paper for me to sign. Seeing the words "reeducation through labor" written on it, I refused. The other officer landed a vicious smack on my left ear, nearly hard enough to send me to the floor. My ear was ringing for a while and it took me quite a while to regain clarity. They handcuffed me again and locked me up in that small room.

After returning to the small room, I was bruised and battered, the pain was unbearable. I couldn't help but feel sick at heart and weak: I preached the gospel with good intentions, I showed people that the Savior had come and that they had to hurry up and pursue the truth and be saved, and yet I have unexpectedly suffered this persecution. In thinking about this, I felt more so that I had been wronged. I called out to God in prayer in my suffering, saying, "Oh God, my stature is too small and I'm too weak. God,

I want to lean on You and stand witness for You. Please guide me.” Later, I thought of a hymn of God’s words: **“Do not be discouraged, do not be weak, and I will make things clear for you. The road to the kingdom is not so smooth; nothing is that simple! You want blessings to come to you easily. Today, everyone will have bitter trials to face. Without such trials, the loving heart you have for Me will not grow stronger and you will not have true love for Me. Even if these trials consist merely of minor circumstances, everyone must pass through them; it’s just that the difficulty of the trials will vary from one person to another. Trials are a blessing from Me, and how many of you come often before Me and beg on your knees for My blessings? You always think that a few auspicious words count as My blessing, yet you do not recognize that bitterness is one of My blessings”** (Follow the Lamb and Sing New Songs, The Pain of Trials Is a Blessing From God). I understood from God’s words that being faced with this persecution and hardship was so that He could perfect my faith and love. That environment was God’s blessing. How could I complain and blame God? I was arrested and tortured, but throughout the entire ordeal God was guiding me with His words; this was God’s love. I sang that hymn in my heart, and the longer I sang it, the more invigorated I felt. It also restored my faith and I swore to God: “God, no matter how the police torture me, I wish to stand witness and never betray You. I’m determined to follow You until the very end.”

At the detention house, the police officers continued to use all sorts of torture methods on me and frequently incited the prisoners to beat up on me. In the chilling cold of winter, they instructed the prisoners to pour buckets of cold water on me and forced me to have a cold shower. I was shivering with cold from head to toe. Experiencing palpitations and breaking out in a sweat, my heart hurt to the point that my back was in

agony, too. The prisoners there were machines making money for the Chinese Communist Party and didn't have any legal rights. They had no other choice but to endure being squeezed and taken advantage of like slaves. During the day, the prison guards forced me to print paper money used as burnt offerings for the dead. At first, they set a rule that I had to print 1,000 pieces of paper per day, then they increased it to 1,800 pieces per day, and finally to 3,000 pieces. This amount was impossible for an experienced person to complete, let alone an inexperienced person like me. In fact, they intentionally made it so I couldn't complete it all so that they could have an excuse to torment and ravage me. As long as I couldn't meet the quota, the evil police officers would put fetters around my legs that weighed over 5 kg, and they bound my hands and feet together with shackles. All I could do was sit there, bow my head and bend my back, not able to move. Even more despicable was that these inhuman and unfeeling police officers didn't ask or care about my basic necessities. Even though the toilet was in the jail cell, I was completely unable to walk over and use it; I could only plead with my cellmates to lift me up onto the toilet. If they were slightly better prisoners, then they would pull me up; if nobody helped me, then I would have no other choice but to hold it. The most painful time was mealtime, because my hands and feet were handcuffed together. I could only lower my head with all my strength and raise my hands and feet. This was the only way I could put a steamed bun into my mouth. I spent a great amount of energy on every bite. The shackles rubbed into my hands and feet causing immense pain. After a long time, my wrists and ankles had developed dark and shiny hard calluses. Often times I couldn't eat when I was locked up, and on rare occasions, prisoners would give me two small steamed buns. Most of the time they would eat my portion and all I got was an empty stomach. I received even less to drink; originally, everyone was

only given two bowls of water per day, but I was locked up and couldn't move, so I was rarely able to drink any water. I was subjected to that kind of inhuman torture four times, lasting a total of ten days. Even in those conditions, the officers made me work the night shift. I'd gone a long time without ever being able to eat my fill; my hunger often left me with palpitations, nausea, and tightness in my chest. I'd also turned into a bag of bones. When my hunger got to the point that I really couldn't take it, I thought of something the Lord Jesus said back to Satan in the midst of a temptation: **"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God"** (Matthew 4:4). That gave me a sense of relief, and I felt ready to personally experience those words from God in Satan's persecution of me. I quieted myself before God to pray and ponder His words, and before I knew it, my pain and hunger had subsided. Once a prisoner said to me: "There was a young person who was handcuffed and starved to death like this before. I have seen that you have not eaten much for several days and you are still in such high spirits." In hearing his words, I silently gave thanks to God. I deeply felt that this was the power of life in God's words supporting me. This truly made me feel that God's word is the truth, the way, and the life and is certainly the foundation I should rely on to survive. Therefore, my faith in God unconsciously increased. In this environment of suffering I was able to truly experience the reality of the truth that **"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God."** This is truly the most precious wealth of life God has granted me, and is also my unique gift. Moreover, I could never have obtained this in an environment where I didn't have to worry about food or clothes. This suffering had so much meaning and value!

This experience of persecution and torture intensified the hatred I had in my heart for the Communist Party. I was arrested and subjected to all

manner of torture for nothing more than believing in God. It was inhuman abuse; it was utterly evil! I thought of a passage of God's words I'd read before: **"The face of the deep is chaotic and dark, while the common folk, suffering such affliction, cry to Heaven and complain to earth. When will man be able to hold his head up high? Man is scrawny and emaciated, how could he contend with this cruel and tyrannical devil? Why does he not give his life to God as soon as he can? Why does he still waver? When can he finish God's work? Thus aimlessly bullied and oppressed, his whole life will ultimately have been spent in vain; why is he in such a hurry to arrive, and such a rush to depart? Why does he not keep something precious to give to God? Has he forgotten the millennia of hate?"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Work and Entry (8)). This experience showed me the true essence of the Communist Party as an enemy of God, an enemy of the truth. It strengthened my resolve to stand witness for God.

One month later, the CCP police foisted the unwarranted charge on me of "disturbing the order of society and destroying the implementation of the law," and I was sentenced to one year of reform through labor. Once I entered the labor camp, the police officers forced me to work every day. While I was in the workshop counting bags, I would count out 100 bags and then tie them together. The prisoners would always intentionally come and take one or several bags from what I had counted, then they would say that I didn't count right and take that as an opportunity to punch and kick me. When the team captain saw me get beaten up, he would come over and hypocritically ask me what was going on and the prisoners would present false evidence that I was not counting enough bags. Then I would have to endure a barrage of stern criticism from the team captain. Whenever I felt wronged and in pain, I would sing a hymn of God's words as I worked:

“During these last days you must bear testimony to God. No matter how great your suffering, you should walk until the very end, and even at your last breath, still you must be faithful to God and at the mercy of God; only this is truly loving God, and only this is the strong and resounding testimony” (Follow the Lamb and Sing New Songs, Seek to Love God No Matter How Great Your Suffering). As I sang and sang, I began feeling moved and inspired, and I couldn’t stop the tears from flowing down my cheeks. I set my resolve that no matter how much I suffered, I would stand witness for God. There was another brother around my same age who happened to be locked up with me at the time. We weren’t allowed to speak when we were working during the day, but at night we’d secretly write out passages of God’s words and hymns that we’d memorized and exchange them with each other. After a while we were assigned to work together, so we’d very quietly share fellowship, helping and encouraging each other. It really helped alleviate the suffering.

In addition, I was forced to memorize the “rules of conduct” every morning, and if I didn’t memorize it, I would be beaten; they also forced me to sing songs that praised the Communist Party. If they saw that I was not singing or that my lips were not moving, then at night I would unavoidably be beaten up. They also punished me by making me mop the floor, and if I didn’t mop to their expectations, then I would be violently beaten. One time, some prisoners suddenly started hitting and kicking me. After beating me, they asked me: “Youngster, do you know why you are being beaten? It is because you didn’t stand up and greet the warden when he came over.” After each time I was beaten, I became angry but didn’t dare to say anything; I could only cry and silently pray to God, telling Him about the resentment and grievance in my heart. In this lawless, irrational place, there was no rationality, there was only violence. There were no people here,

there were only insane demons! I felt so much pain and pressure living in this plight every day; I wasn't willing to stay a minute longer. Each time I fell into a condition of weakness and pain, I would think about Almighty God's words: **"Have you ever accepted the blessings that you were given? Have you ever sought the promises that were made for you? You will surely, under the guidance of My light, break through the stranglehold of the forces of darkness. You will surely not, in the midst of darkness, lose the light guiding you. You will surely be the master of all creation. You will surely be an overcomer before Satan. You will surely, at the downfall of the kingdom of the great red dragon, stand up amid the myriad throngs to bear witness to My victory. You will surely stand firm and unwavering in the land of Sinim. Through the sufferings you endure, you will inherit My blessings, and will surely radiate My glory throughout the entire universe"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God's Words to the Entire Universe, Chapter 19). God's words encouraged me. I understood that everything God had done in me was to provide for me and save me; it was to put truth into me and make truth my life. God permitted the persecution and tribulation to come upon me, and even though I suffered much physically, it allowed me to see clearly the great red dragon's evil essence of resisting and hating God, detest and forsake it, completely escape Satan's influence, and turn entirely to God and be made into an overcomer by God. It also allowed me to be able to truly experience that God is with me; it caused me to truly enjoy God's words becoming the bread of my life and the lamp to my feet and the light to my path, leading me step by step through this dark hell hole. This is the love and protection of God that I enjoyed and obtained during the persecution and tribulation. At this time, I was able to see that I was so blind. In believing in God, I only knew how to enjoy God's grace and blessing and

didn't pursue the truth and life in the slightest degree. Once my flesh suffered a little hardship, I would whine incessantly; I simply didn't understand the will of God and didn't seek to understand the work of God. I would always cause God to feel grief and pain over me. I was truly without conscience! In feeling remorse and self-blame, I silently prayed to God: "Oh Almighty God, I can see that everything You do is to save and obtain me. I just hate that I am so rebellious and blind. I have always misunderstood You and have not been considerate of Your will. Oh God, today Your word has awakened my numb heart and spirit and has caused me to understand Your will. I am no longer willing to have my own desires and requirements; I will only submit to Your arrangements. No matter how much suffering I have to endure, I will bear testimonies to You throughout Satan's persecutions." After praying, I understood God's good intentions, and I knew that each environment God allowed me to experience was God's greatest love and salvation for me. Therefore, I would no longer think to cower or misunderstand God. Even though the situation was still the same, my heart was truly full of joy and pleasure; I felt that it was an honor to be able to suffer hardships and persecution for my belief in God, and it was a unique gift for me, a corrupt person; it was God's special blessing and grace for me.

After having experienced a year of hardship in prison, I see that I am so small of stature and that I lack so much truth. Almighty God truly has made up for my deficiencies through this unique environment and allowed me to grow. In my adversity, He has enabled me to obtain the most precious wealth in life, to understand many truths I didn't understand in the past and to clearly see the CCP's heinous crimes of persecuting God and tormenting Christians. I have recognized the repulsive appearance of Satan, the demon, and the reactionary essence of its resistance to God. I have earnestly

experienced the great salvation and mercy Almighty God has for me, a corrupt person, and felt that the power and life in Almighty God's words can bring me light and be my life and lead me to prevail over Satan and to tenaciously walk out of the valley of the shadow of death. Thanks be to God!

82. Interrogation Room Torture

By Xiao Min, China

In 2012, in the course of preaching the gospel, I was arrested by the Chinese Communist Party. Toward evening on September 13, I returned home and, just as I always did, I parked my electric scooter outside and pressed the doorbell. To my surprise, no sooner had I opened the door than four burly men pounced on me like wolves. They twisted my arms behind my back and handcuffed me, then shoved me down onto a chair and pinned me there. Several policemen immediately began rummaging through my bag. Faced with this sudden and ferocious display of force, I was dumbfounded with fright, and felt like a pitiful little lamb caught by vicious wolves, without any strength to resist whatsoever. They then took me out and put me into the back of a black sedan car. Inside the car, the police chief, looking like a pathetic little man intoxicated with his own success, turned and grinned slyly at me, saying, “Hah! Do you know how we caught you?” Afraid that I might try to make a run for it, two policemen held me down on either side, as though I were a dangerous criminal. I felt both angry and panicked, and I couldn’t guess how the police would torment me. I was deeply afraid that I would not be able to withstand their torture and would become a Judas and betray God. But then I thought of God’s words: **“As long as you pray and supplicate before Me frequently, I will bestow all faith upon you. Those in power may seem vicious from the outside, but do not be afraid, for this is because you have little faith. As long as your faith grows, nothing will be too difficult”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 75). Almighty God’s words gave me faith and strength and, gradually, they helped me to calm down. “Yes,” I thought. “No matter how savage and fierce the wicked police are,

they are just pawns in God's hands and they are in God's orchestrations. As long as I pray and call on God with a true heart, then God will be with me and there is nothing to worry about. If these wicked policemen torture and beat me cruelly, then that will just be God wanting to test my faith. No matter how they might torment my flesh, they can never stop my heart from looking to God and calling on God. Even if they kill my flesh, they cannot kill my soul, as everything I am is held in God's hands." Once I'd thought of this, I no longer feared Satan the devil and I became resolved to stand witness for God. I therefore called out in my heart, "O Almighty God! No matter what they do to me today, I am willing to face it all. Though my flesh is weak, I wish to live in reliance on You and not give Satan even one chance to exploit me. Please protect me, let me not betray You, and let me not become a shameful Judas." As we were driving along, I kept singing in my mind one of the church hymns: "By God's sovereignty and arrangements, I meet adversity and undergo trials. How can I lose heart, how can I hide? God's glory comes first. In adversity, God's words guide me and my faith is perfected. To God I give my utmost devotion, what matter if I die, God's will is higher than all" (Follow the Lamb and Sing New Songs, I Ask Only That God Be Satisfied). As I silently sang, my heart was filled with strength, and I became determined to rely on God to stand witness and humiliate Satan.

Once they had taken me into the interrogation room, I was surprised to see that a sister who performed the same church duty as me and a church leader were there as well. They had all been caught too! One of the police officers saw me looking at my church sisters and he fixed me with his gaze and scolded me, saying, "What are you gawking at? Get in there!" To stop us from talking to each other, the police locked us up in different interrogation rooms. They roughly searched me, undid my belt and frisked

me all over. It felt like such a gross insult, and I saw how truly evil, despicable and mean these CCP government demon underlings are! I felt furious, but I had to choke on my fury, as there was no place in this den of monsters for reason. After they had confiscated a new electric scooter that belonged to the church and over 600 yuan I had on me, they began to question me. “What’s your name? What’s your position in the church? Who’s your leader? Where are they now?” I made no answer, so the policeman roared at me, “Do you think we won’t find out if you don’t tell us? You have no idea what we can do! You should know that we’ve arrested your upper-level leaders too!” They then proceeded to list a few names and asked if I knew any of them, and they continued to question me. “Where is all your church’s money kept? Tell us!” I rebuffed everything they said, saying, “I don’t know anyone! I don’t know anything!” When they saw that their first round of questioning had failed, they decided to play their ace, and they began to take turns to interrogate and torment me in an attempt to wear me down. Because on the first day the police hadn’t managed to get the information they wanted from me, they were shamed into anger, and the chief among them said fiercely, “I’m not going to give in to her recalcitrance. Torture her!” The police took my handcuffed hands which were still behind my back and hung them on a table, then they forced me to maintain a half-squat position. They eyed me hostilely and pressed me with questions. “Where is your leader? Where is all the church’s money?” They were just itching for me to break under the pressure of that torture and capitulate to them. After the wicked police had continued this torment for about half an hour, my legs began to ache and tremble. My heart was beating hard and my arms were hurting badly too. I was at the limit of my endurance and I felt as though I couldn’t last a moment longer, and so I called out in earnest in my heart: “O Almighty God! Please save me. I can’t

take it anymore. I don't want to betray You as a Judas. Please give me strength." Just then, these words of God came to mind: **"Behind every step of work that God does in you is Satan's wager with God—behind it all is a battle. ... When God and Satan do battle in the spiritual realm, how should you satisfy God, and how should you stand firm in your testimony to Him? You should know that everything that happens to you is a great trial and the time when God needs you to bear testimony"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Only Loving God Is Truly Believing in God). God's words awakened me and enabled me to realize that Satan was tormenting me in this way to make me betray God and give up pursuing the truth. This was a battle being waged in the spiritual realm: It was Satan trying to tempt me, and it was also God's way of trying me. This was the very moment that God needed me to bear witness. God had expectations of me and so many angels were watching me right now, as was Satan the devil, all waiting for me to declare my position. I simply could not give up and lie down and I could not surrender to Satan; I knew I had to allow God's work to be carried out through me in order to meet God's will. By unalterable principle, this was the duty I should be performing as a created being—this was my calling. At this crucial juncture, my attitude and my behavior were to have a direct impact on my ability to bear victorious witness for God, and even more so were to have a direct impact on my ability to become a testimony to God's defeat of Satan and His gaining of glory. I knew I could not cause God grief or disappoint Him, and I could not allow the cunning schemes of Satan that afflicted me to succeed. Thinking these thoughts, strength suddenly rose up in my heart and I said staunchly, "You can beat me to death, but I still don't know anything!" Just then, a female police officer came into the room. She saw me and said, "Quickly, let her down. What are you trying to do, kill her? It's on your head if

something happens to her!” I knew in my heart that Almighty God had heard my prayers and had kept me safe from harm in this moment of danger. When the wicked policemen let me down, I immediately crumpled to the floor. I couldn’t stand, and my arms and legs had totally lost all feeling. I barely had the strength to breathe and couldn’t feel my four limbs at all. I felt so scared right then and tears rolled ceaselessly from my eyes. I thought: “Am I going to end up crippled?” Despite this, however, the wicked policemen still didn’t let me go. With one on either side of me, they took hold of my arms and dragged me like a corpse over to a chair, and pushed me down onto it. One of the policemen said viciously, “If she doesn’t speak then hang her up with rope!” Very quickly, the other wicked policeman took out a thin nylon rope and used it to hang my handcuffed hands onto a heating pipe. My arms were immediately pulled straight, and my back and shoulders soon began to hurt. The wicked policemen kept on questioning me, asking, “Are you going to tell us what we want to know?” Still, I made no answer. They got so angry that they threw a cup of water in my face, saying it was to wake me up. By this time, I had already been tortured to the point where I had not even an ounce of strength left, and my eyes were so tired I couldn’t even open them. Seeing that I remained silent, one of the wicked policemen meanly and shamelessly forced my eyes open with his hands to make fun of me. In several hours of interrogation and torture, the wicked policemen had gone through every trick in their book, but their attempts to make me talk had all ended in failure.

Seeing that they couldn’t get anything out of me by questioning me, the wicked policemen decided to employ a devilish plot: They had someone from the city who called himself an “interrogation expert” come to deal with me. They took me to another room and ordered me to sit on a metal chair, then they chained my ankles tightly to the chair legs and my hands to

the chair arms. A little while later, a bespectacled, refined-looking man came in with a briefcase. He smiled broadly at me and, pretending to be nice, he undid the chains holding my hands and ankles to the chair and allowed me to sit on a cot bed to one side of the room. One moment he was pouring me a cup of water, then he was treating me with sweets. He came up to me and said with feigned friendliness, “Why suffer like this? You’ve suffered so much, but actually it’s not that big a deal. Tell us what we want to know, and everything will be alright....” Faced with this new situation, I didn’t know what I should do, so I hurriedly prayed to God in my heart and called on Him to enlighten me and guide me. Just then, I thought of Almighty God’s words: **“You must be awake and waiting at all times, and you must pray before Me more. You must recognize the various plots and cunning schemes of Satan, recognize the spirits, know people, and be able to discern all kinds of people, events, and things”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 17). God’s words showed me the path of practice and helped me to realize that a devil will always be a devil, and that a devil can never change its demonic God-resisting, God-hating essence. Whether they use hard tactics or soft tactics, their goal is always to make me betray God and forsake the true way. Thanks to the warning of God’s words, I came to have some discernment of Satan’s cunning schemes, my mind cleared, and I was able to take a firm stand. The interrogator then said to me, “The CCP government forbids people from believing in God. If you continue to believe in Almighty God, then your whole family will be implicated, and it will affect the futures, the employment prospects, and the civil service prospects of the children in your family. You’d better think it over carefully.” After he’d said this, a battle began to rage within me, and I felt doubly disturbed. Just as I was feeling lost, I suddenly thought of Peter’s

experiences when he successfully stood witness before Satan; Peter always tried to understand God through every cunning scheme Satan threw at him. And so, deep in my heart, I looked to God and entrusted everything to Him, and I sought God's will. Without being aware of it, Almighty God's words came into my mind: **"God created this world, He created this mankind and, moreover, He was the architect of ancient Greek culture and human civilization. Only God consoles this mankind, and only God cares for this mankind night and day. Human development and progress are inseparable from the sovereignty of God, and the history and future of mankind are inextricable from the designs of God. If you are a true Christian, then you will surely believe that the rise and fall of any country or nation occurs according to the designs of God. God alone knows the fate of a country or nation, and God alone controls the course of this mankind"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Appendix 2: God Presides Over the Fate of All Mankind). God's words filled me with light. "Yes!" I thought. "God is the Creator and our fate as mankind is in God's hands. Satan the devil is of the ilk that defies God. If they can't even alter their own destiny of being doomed to hell, then how could they rule the fate of man? Man's destiny is predestined by God, and whatever jobs my children might do in the future and however their prospects will be is up to God—Satan has no control over these things whatsoever." Thinking of this, I became able to see even more clearly how despicable and shameless Satan and demons are. So as to force me to deny God and reject God, it was employing insidious and vile tactics—these mind games—to lure me into being duped. Had it not been for the timely enlightenment and guidance of Almighty God, I would already have been overthrown and taken captive by Satan. Now that I knew how despicable and evil Satan was, my confidence to not give in to its cunning schemes was strengthened. In the end, the

wicked policeman was at a loss and didn't know what else to do, and so he left in dejection.

On the third day, the chief of the Criminal Police Brigade saw that they'd gotten no information out of me and became furious, complaining about his underlings for their incompetence. He came to me and, with a wry smile on his face, spoke sarcastically, saying, "Why haven't you come clean yet? Who do you think you are, Liu Hulan? You think we've already done our worst so you're not afraid, huh? Why doesn't your Almighty God come and save you?" As he spoke, he frightened me by waving a small electric baton in front of my eyes that crackled and flashed with blue light, then he pointed at a large electric baton that was currently being charged and threatened me, saying, "Do you see that? This small baton will soon run out of power. In a moment, I'll use that fully charged large baton to electrocute you, and then we'll see if you talk! I know you'll start talking then!" I looked at the large baton and I couldn't help but begin to panic: "This wicked policeman is so fierce and diabolical. Will he end up killing me? Will I be able to endure this torment? Will I be electrocuted to death?" In that moment, weakness, cowardliness, and the pain and helplessness I felt all flooded my mind. I hurriedly called on God: "Oh God, please protect me and give me faith and strength." Then, several lines from a hymn of God's words drifted into my mind: **"Faith is like a single log bridge: Those who cling abjectly to life will have difficulty in crossing it, but those who are ready to sacrifice themselves can pass over, sure of foot and worry-free. If man harbors timid and fearful thoughts, it is because Satan has fooled them, afraid that we will cross the bridge of faith to enter into God"** (Follow the Lamb and Sing New Songs, The Onset of Illness Is God's Love). These words of the Lord Jesus also came to mind: **"And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him which is**

able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matthew 10:28). God’s words caused my tears to flow freely—I felt incredibly moved. The strength in my heart was like a raging fire. “Even if I die today,” I thought, “what is there to fear? It is a glorious thing to die for God, and I will give up everything to fight with Satan to the death!” Just then, some lines from another hymn of God’s words came to mind: **“On the road to Jerusalem, Jesus was in agony, as if a knife were being twisted in His heart, yet He had not the slightest intention of going back on His word; always there was a powerful force compelling Him onward to where He would be crucified. Ultimately, He was nailed to the cross and became the likeness of sinful flesh, completing the work of the redemption of mankind. He broke free of the shackles of death and Hades. Before Him, mortality, hell, and Hades lost their power, and were vanquished by Him”** (Follow the Lamb and Sing New Songs, Emulate the Lord Jesus). I sang and sang in my heart, and tears fell ceaselessly down my cheeks. The scene of the Lord Jesus Christ being crucified played before my very eyes: The Lord Jesus was mocked, reviled and slandered by the Pharisees, the executioner lashed Him with a lead-tipped whip until He was covered in cuts and bruises, until finally He was cruelly nailed to the cross, and yet He never made a sound. Everything the Lord Jesus went through was suffered for the sake of His love for mankind, and this love overcame His love for His own life. At that moment, my heart was inspired and moved by God’s love, and I was filled with tremendous strength and faith. I felt unafraid of anything, and I felt like it would be glorious to die for God, whereas to be a Judas would be the greatest shame. To my surprise, when I decided I would stand witness for God even at the cost of my own life, a wicked policeman ran into the room, saying, “There’s trouble at the city square, we have to mobilize the police force to suppress it and maintain public order!” The

wicked policemen hurried away. By the time they got back, it was late into the night, and they didn't have the energy to interrogate me anymore. They said viciously to me, "Since you won't talk, we'll send you to the detention house!" On the morning of the fourth day, the wicked policemen took my photo and hung a big square sign around my neck with my name written on it with a brush. I was like a denounced criminal, being mocked and ridiculed by the wicked police. I felt like I was being subjected to the greatest humiliation, and I felt very weak inside. I realized that my state of mind was not right, and so I hurriedly called on God silently in my heart: "O God! Please protect my heart and enable me to understand Your will and not fall prey to Satan's cunning schemes." After praying, a passage of God's words appeared in my mind: **"You are a created being—you should of course worship God and pursue a life of meaning. If you do not worship God but live within your filthy flesh, then are you not just a beast in human attire? Since you are a human being, you should expend yourself for God and endure all suffering! You should gladly and assuredly accept the little suffering you are subjected to today and live a meaningful life, like Job and Peter. ... You are people who pursue the right path, those who seek improvement. You are people who rise up in the nation of the great red dragon, those whom God calls righteous. Is that not the most meaningful life?"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Practice (2)). God's words allowed me to understand that, to be able to pursue the truth as a created being, and to live to worship God and satisfy God, was the most meaningful and worthwhile life. To be able today to be captured and detained for my belief in God, to suffer all this humiliation and pain, and to be able to share in the tribulations of Christ, was not a shameful thing, but a glorious one. Satan does not worship God; on the contrary, it does all it can to interrupt and obstruct God's work,

and this is what is most shameful and despicable. Thinking these thoughts, I became filled with strength and joy. The wicked policemen saw the smile on my face and gazed at me in amazement, and said, “What do you have to be happy about?” I replied justly and forcefully, “It is perfectly justified to believe in God and worship God. There is absolutely nothing wrong with doing so. Why shouldn’t I be happy?” Hearing these words, they said nothing. Under the guidance of God’s words, I was once again able to rely on God to overcome Satan.

I was then taken into the detention house. Everything in that place was even more gloomy and frightening, and I felt like I’d descended into some sort of hell. For every meal, I was given a small black piece of steamed bread and a bowl of clear soup with a few bok choy leaves floating on the top. I was so hungry all day every day, my stomach was crying out for food. Despite this, however, I still had to work like a beast of burden, and if I didn’t meet my quota, I was beaten or made to stand guard as a punishment. Because the evil policemen had cruelly tortured me for several days, I was already bruised and injured from head to toe, and it became hard even to walk, but the correctional officer still forced me to carry heavy loads of copper wire. Because of this heavy work, my injured back became unbearably painful, and all I could do at the end of each day was crawl onto my bed. Despite this, the wicked correctional officer would make me stand guard at nighttime, and this made me feel too exhausted. One night while I was on guard duty, I took advantage of the wicked correctional officer’s absence and, stealthily, I crouched down, hoping to have a rest. Unexpectedly, however, a wicked correctional officer saw me on the screen in the surveillance room and stormed over to me bellowing, “Who said you could sit down?” One of the other prisoners whispered to me, “Hurry and apologize to him, or else he’ll make you ‘sleep on the wooden bed.’” By

this, she meant the torture where a wooden door board is taken into the prisoner's cell, their legs and feet are chained to it, and their wrists are roped to it. The prisoner is then tied to the board, and they are not allowed to move again for two weeks. Hearing this, I was filled with both anger and hatred, but I knew I couldn't show even the slightest bit of resistance—all I could do was swallow my anger. I found such bullying and torture hard to bear. That night, I lay on my freezing cold bed crying at the injustice of it all, my heart filled with complaints and demands toward God, thinking: "When will this end? Just one day in this hellish place is one day too many." I then thought of God's words: **"If you understand the significance of human life and have taken the right path of human life, and if in the future you submit to His designs without any complaints or choices no matter how God deals with you, and if you do not make any demands of God, then in this way you will be a person of value"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. How You Should Walk the Final Stretch of the Path). God's words made me ashamed of myself. I thought of how I always said that I would seek to obey God like Peter did, no matter how great the pain or hardship, and that I would make no decisions or demands for my own sake. When persecution and hardship befell me, however, and I had to suffer and pay the price, I tried to think about a way out. I had no obedience at all! Only then did I finally understand God's good intentions: God was allowing this misery to befall me to temper my resolve to endure suffering, and to allow me to learn how to obey in my suffering, so that I would be able to submit to God's orchestrations and be qualified to receive His promise. Everything God was doing to me was being done out of love and it was being done to save me. My heart was thereafter liberated, and I no longer felt wronged or pained. All I wanted was to submit to God's orchestrations and arrangements, to stand witness and humiliate Satan.

A month later, I was released. They did, however, label me with the charge of “disrupting enforcement of the law and taking part in a xie jiao organization” so as to restrict my personal freedom. For one year, I was not permitted to leave my city or province, and I had to be at the police’s beck and call whenever they wanted me. Only after I got back home did I find out that all the belongings I had kept at home had been robbed and taken by the police. Besides this, the wicked police had ransacked my home like brigands, and had threatened my family, saying that they had to hand over 25,000 yuan before they would let me go. My mother-in-law couldn’t stand the fright of it all and had a heart attack, and only recovered after being admitted to hospital and receiving treatment, at the cost of over 2,000 yuan. In the end, my family was forced to ask everyone they knew to lend them money so they could scrape together 3,000 yuan for the police, and only then was I released. Due to the cruel tortures inflicted on me by the wicked police, my body has been left suffering with severe aftereffects: My arms and legs often swell up and become sore due to the severe stress put on them during my incarceration; I cannot even lift two and a half kilos of vegetables or wash my clothes, and I have completely lost the ability to work.

That experience of being arrested and persecuted gave me a clear view of the Communist Party, of its evil, demonic face that hates the truth and hates God. It riled up my detest for Satan and for the demonic, perverse Chinese Communist Party that runs entirely contrary to Heaven. I also had a genuine, personal experience of how practical and wise God’s work is. Being arrested and persecuted by the Communist Party developed my discernment; it also tempered my resolve and perfected my faith, allowing me to learn how to look to and lean on God. I also got a taste of the power and authority of God’s words, seeing that they can be a source of help that’s

always by our sides. I saw that only God loves man and only God can save man. I grew closer to God in my heart. I reaped all of these rewards from undergoing hardship and trials. I give thanks to God!

83. Victorious Through Satan's Temptations

By Chen Lu, China

This was back in December 2012, while I was out of town spreading the gospel. One morning while in a gathering with over a dozen other brothers and sisters, there was suddenly urgent knocking at the door, and then six or seven police officers burst in aggressively, wielding batons. They shoved us apart and then started searching, turning the place upside down. A sister stepped forward and asked, “We haven’t broken any laws—what right do you have to conduct a search?” An officer’s angry response was, “Behave! You stand there like you’re told, and don’t speak unless spoken to!” Then he violently pushed her down onto the floor, breaking off one of her nails and drawing blood right there. Seeing how vicious the police were left me both irate and afraid, so I said a silent prayer, asking God to give me faith and strength, hoping to stand witness for Him. I felt much calmer after praying. After a sweep of the place, the police confiscated quite a few gospel materials and books of God’s words and put us all into their vehicles.

At the police station, they took everything we had on us and demanded to know our names, addresses, and who the church leader was. I didn’t say a word. Then when they were getting ready to interrogate me on my own I started to feel really afraid; I’d heard that the police were brutal with those they find traveling to share the gospel, and they had marked me as a prime target for interrogation. It looked really grim for me. Just then I heard a sister who was right by me pray, “Oh God, You are our strong tower, our refuge. Satan is at Your feet. I want to lean on Your words, stand witness and satisfy You!” This brightened my heart, and I thought, “That’s right. God has our back, so what do I have to fear? As long as I lean on God I can

certainly triumph over Satan.” My fear dissipated and I felt ashamed at the same time. She prayed and relied on God in the face of this without wavering in her faith, but I was trembling with fear, totally lacking the backbone a believer should have. Through the encouragement and help of this sister’s prayer—the love of God—I silently resolved within my heart that I would definitely stand witness, that I absolutely would not become a Judas and betray God.

Around 10 o’clock, two officers handcuffed me and took me into a room for individual questioning. One of them said something to me in the local dialect that I couldn’t understand, so I asked him what he’d said. To my surprise, this enraged all of them, and the one standing next to him grabbed me by the hair and yanked my head back and forth with it. That left me dizzy and disoriented; my scalp felt like it was being ripped right off and my hair was all over the floor. Right after that, another officer barked at me, “We’ll get it out of you one way or another! Talk! Who sent you out to proselytize?” No sooner had I said “Sharing the gospel is my duty” than he grabbed me by the hair and started slapping me, all while yelling, “I’d like to see you try sharing that gospel again!” My face was burning from being hit and was getting swollen. He only let go once he’d worn himself out, but he kept barraging me with questions. “You’re not from around here—you talk so pretty, you’re not just an average person. Open your mouth! Why are you here? Who sent you here? Who’s your leader? ...” My heart leapt into my throat and I was calling out to God nonstop, asking Him for faith and strength. Praying steadied my nerves and I responded, “I don’t know anything.” Then he pounded on the table and shouted, “Just you wait. We’ll get you in line in no time,” while he picked up my MP4 player and started toying with it. Frightened and wondering what kind of tactics they would use to torture me, I urgently called out to God. It just so happened that a

reading of God's words started playing on the MP4 player, saying, **"Toward those who showed Me not the slightest loyalty during times of tribulation, I shall be merciful no more, for My mercy only extends so far. I have no liking, furthermore, for anyone who has once betrayed Me, much less do I like to associate with those who sell out the interests of their friends. This is My disposition, regardless of who the person may be. I must tell you this: Anyone who breaks My heart shall not receive clemency from Me a second time, and anyone who has been faithful to Me shall forever remain in My heart"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Prepare Sufficient Good Deeds for Your Destination). Hearing this really stung for me. I thought about how, when the Lord Jesus was performing His work, He had so many people following Him and enjoying His grace. But when He was crucified and the Roman soldiers were going crazy arresting Christians, a lot of them turned tail and ran in fear. That was so hurtful for God! Just the same, I had also been enjoying God's grace and blessings, and confidently following Him, but as soon as I faced hardship that required me to suffer and pay a price, I became timid and fearful. How could that bring comfort to God's heart? In the last days, God has become flesh and come to China, this land of demons where the Chinese Communist Party rules, in order to save us, corrupted human beings. He has suffered through being oppressed and hounded by the Communist Party, but even so He's never stopped expressing truths and guiding us. The price He has paid to save us has been enormous, and I had been freely enjoying God's salvation, but I couldn't handle a little bit of hardship to satisfy God. That was incredibly selfish. My conscience really felt accused and I felt a deep sense of God's love and care for me. God knew what an immature stature I had and that I was fearful in the face of Satan's abuse. That's why He allowed me to understand His will by having the police play a reading

of His words that I could hear, to help me stand witness through adversity. I was so moved by God's love that tears flowed down my face, and I silently prayed, "God, I will not betray You. No matter how Satan torments me, I will resolutely stand witness and shame Satan to comfort Your heart."

The officer suddenly turned off the MP4 player with a smack and said to me menacingly, "If you still won't talk, I have plenty more in store for you!" Then the police made me stand on the floor barefoot and handcuffed my right hand to an iron ring set in a concrete block that was really low to the ground. They made me bend at the waist instead of squatting, and they wouldn't let me brace myself on a leg with my other hand. After a while, when I couldn't stay standing anymore and squatted down, an officer shouted at me, "No squatting! If you want some relief, you'd better talk!" All I could do was force myself to hold that position. After a while, I don't know how long, my feet were as cold as ice and my legs were painfully sore and numb. I squatted down, truly unable to stay up. The police hauled me back up and dumped a glass of cold water down the back of my neck, leaving me shaking from the cold. Then they uncuffed me, had me sit on a wooden chair, handcuffed my arms behind me to each side of the chair, and opened the window and turned the air conditioner on. With the frigid air blowing directly on me, I was shuddering from the cold and silently praying nonstop, asking God for the resolve to withstand this, to allow me to overcome my fleshly weakness. Just then, I thought of a line from a hymn of God's words: **"Faith is like a single log bridge: Those who cling abjectly to life will have difficulty in crossing it, but those who are ready to sacrifice themselves can pass over, sure of foot and worry-free"** (Follow the Lamb and Sing New Songs, The Onset of Illness Is God's Love). I realized that the police wanted to get me to betray God through physical torture, and if I cared for the flesh, I would fall for their trap. I had to have faith in God and

stand witness for Him, no matter how much I may suffer. After that, the police brought over a big pot of cold water and poured it down onto my neck, thoroughly soaking my clothing. I felt like I was being thrust into an icehouse. Seeing how hard I was shivering, an officer grabbed me by the hair and forced my head up so I was looking at the sky through the window, then said mockingly, “You’re cold, aren’t you? Have your God come save you!” When I ignored him, he dumped another big pot of cold water over me, set the air conditioner to its lowest setting, and pointed it straight at me. The freezing cold air and the chilly wind from outside enveloped me once again, freezing me so that I curled up into a little ball. I felt like I was about to become frozen solid and my blood felt like it was turning to ice. I couldn’t stop myself from thinking wild thoughts: “Pouring cold water on me and using the air conditioner on such a cold day—they’re trying to freeze me to death, aren’t they? If I die here my family won’t even know....” The more I thought like this, the more I succumbed to darkness. Just then, the way the Lord Jesus suffered on the cross for the people He redeemed suddenly came to mind, as did this passage of God’s words: **“Love that has experienced refinement is strong, not weak. Regardless of when or how God subjects you to His trials, you are able to lay down your concerns about whether you live or die, to gladly cast aside everything for God, and to happily endure anything for God—thus your love will be pure and your faith real. Only then will you be someone who is truly loved by God, and who has truly been made perfect by God”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Only by Experiencing Refinement Can Man Possess True Love). God’s words really encouraged me. God suffered to the utmost and even gave up His life in order to save us. Shouldn’t I, as a created being, be that much more ready to endure any kind of suffering for God? Being able to stand witness for God in front of Satan

was God uplifting me, and even if it meant my death, I had to be steadfastly devout to God. Very gradually, my feeling of cold subsided. The police continued their interrogation from midday all the way until about 7:00 that evening. Seeing I still wouldn't open my mouth, they just locked me in the interrogation room with the air conditioner still going.

The police had their dinner and then came back in and said threateningly, "Spit it out! Who's your church's leader? If you don't tell us, we'll have you drink hot chili water, drink soapy water, make you eat shit, rip off all your clothing and drag you into the basement to freeze to death!" Hearing them say this really showed me that they weren't remotely human, but were a pack of demons wearing human faces. The more brutal they were, the more they menaced me, the more I despised them and the more resolute I became to never fold. When I still didn't give in, they soaked a cloth bag in water and put it over my head, held my head so I couldn't move it, and started to pull the opening tight. I was practically suffocating in no time at all, but still handcuffed to the chair, I couldn't move in the slightest. I felt like my whole body was starting to get stiff. That still wasn't enough for them. They poured cold water from the pot into my nose, saying that they'd smother me if I kept refusing to confess. I was having a really hard time breathing and could feel death looming closer bit by bit, so I silently prayed to God, "Oh God, this breath is given to me by You. No matter what the police do to me, even if I lose my life, I will not betray You. I am willing to submit to Your orchestrations and arrangements." Just as I was on the verge of losing consciousness and I nearly couldn't breathe, the police suddenly let go. I gave thanks to God within my heart over and over. I knew that even though I had fallen into the police's hands, unless God allowed it, they could never take my life. My faith grew even greater.

The next afternoon, a few officers took me and another sister to a detention center. One of them said to me threateningly, “You’re not a local, so we can just lock you up for a few months and then sentence you to three to five years. No one will ever know.” I weakened a bit at the mention of being sentenced and thought, “If I really am sentenced and go to prison, how will I ever show my face again? What would people think of me?” The cell I was locked up in was full of sisters from The Church of Almighty God, so when they saw that I was feeling negative and weak, they fellowshiped on the truth with me to help and support me, and sang a church hymn for me called “Repaying God’s Love and Being His Witness,” which says: “God humbly became flesh to save mankind, walking among the churches, expressing the truth, painstakingly watering us, guiding us every step. This He has done every day for decades, it’s all to purify and perfect man. He has seen many springs, summers, autumns, winters, happy to take the bitter with the sweet. He’s selflessly sacrificed all without any regret, He’s given all of His love to mankind. I’ve undergone God’s judgment and tasted the bitterness of trials. The sweet follows the bitter, my corruption has been cleansed, I offer up my heart and body to repay God’s love. I go from place to place toiling, expending myself for God. Loved ones discard me, others defame me, but I will unwaveringly love God till the end. I am utterly devoted to following God’s will. I endure the persecution and tribulations, experience the ups and downs of life. Even if I endure a life of bitterness, I must follow God and testify to Him” (Follow the Lamb and Sing New Songs). Pondering the hymn lyrics really heartened me. We were in China, this country that hates and resists God more than any other, following the true God and taking the right path in life, so it was inevitable that we would suffer plenty of pain and hardship. But that was nothing to be ashamed of—we were persecuted because we had faith and were on the

right path. We were suffering oppression for the sake of righteousness, and that was an honor. I thought of all the saints through the ages who had never gotten to hear so many of God's words, but they still had faith in God, and no matter how great their oppression or what kind of humiliation they suffered, they never betrayed God, even if it meant their deaths. They were resounding witnesses. I had freely received so much watering and sustenance from God's words and gotten to understand mysteries and truth that generations of people had never understood before, so why couldn't I suffer a little and give testimony for God? This thought left me feeling ashamed and guilty, and I regained my faith, strength, and resolve to stand witness for God.

After 10 days, the police brought me to a detention house alone. The moment I went in, another prisoner said to me, "Most people who come in here don't get out. We're all waiting for our verdicts, and some of us have waited for months and months." This made me think of the brothers and sisters who had served sentences for eight, 10, or even 15 years. I didn't know how many years I would get—what if I stayed locked up in this dark hell? How would I get through the long days ahead? I was in agony, and tears welled up in my eyes. Aware that I was falling for one of Satan's tricks, I prayed fervently and asked God to protect my heart. And then I gained a clear guiding light within me: God was allowing this to happen to me, just as Job's trials—I couldn't complain. These words of God came to mind: **"The testimony to My defeat of Satan lies within the loyalty and obedience of man, as does the testimony to My complete conquest of man. ... Would you rather submit to My every arrangement (even if it be death or destruction), or flee midway to avoid My chastisement?"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. What Do You Know of Faith?). This question from God left me feeling ashamed. I realized I was totally lacking

in devotion and obedience to God. I claimed I wanted to be a wonderful witness for God, but when I actually faced prison time, I wanted to run away and escape the situation. What kind of submission was that? Thinking back on the time since my arrest, God had been guiding and encouraging me with His words the entire time, always leading me to see through Satan's tricks, to triumph over those demons' brutal torture and keep on living. I saw how very real God's love for me is, that it's not remotely empty or false. But I wasn't thinking of standing witness for God and satisfying Him in this environment; instead, I was selfish and self-serving, only thinking about fleshly gains and losses and wanting to flee the moment I suffered a bit. It was so selfish and despicable. Where was my humanity? Where was my conscience? I was filled with regret and self-recrimination at this thought, so I silently prayed to God with remorse. "Oh God, I was wrong. I can't keep paying lip service this way and being dishonest with You. I want to please You with actual deeds. I will stand witness without a doubt, no matter what the verdict turns out to be." The weather was cold, so the other prisoners in the detention house gave me some clothing, and they helped me with the labor I had to perform every day. They took care of me in all sorts of ways. I knew this was what God had arranged, and I offered Him my heartfelt thanks.

The police would question me once every few days in the detention house. Seeing that harsher tactics weren't working, they switched to a softer approach. One officer tried to chat with me with this congenial look on his face, and bought me some nice things to eat. He also said he could help me find a good job. I knew this was one of Satan's tricks, so I completely ignored him. During one interrogation, the police finally revealed their evil intention: "We don't have anything personal against you—we just want to eradicate The Church of Almighty God, and we're hoping you could work

for us.” Hearing them say something so horrible deeply angered me. God has become flesh and come to the world in the last days in order to save mankind, but the Chinese Communist Party madly opposes and condemns Him, and arrests and persecutes believers. And now they wanted to get me to sell out the church and become their puppet. It was despicable. I saw that the Communist Party is a gang of demons who are determined to fight God—they’re so evil and reactionary! I was filled with all-encompassing hatred for the Party and wanted nothing but to bear testimony to shame those demons of Satan. The police tried another psychological trick when I still didn’t say anything. They found my husband through the mobile phone service provider and brought him and our child in from out of town to see me at the detention house. My husband had never been opposed to my faith, but because of the police threatening and enticing him, he was saying over and over, “I’m begging you to give up your faith. Even if it’s not for my sake, just think of our son. Imagine what it would do to him to have his mom in prison.” Hearing this from him was really hard for me. I thought of this hymn of God’s words right then: **“The utmost faith and love are required from us in the work of the last days. We may stumble from the slightest carelessness, for this stage of work is different from all the previous ones: What God is perfecting is mankind’s faith, which is both invisible and intangible. What God does is convert words to faith, to love, and to life. People must reach a point where they have endured hundreds of refinements and possess faith greater than Job’s. They must endure incredible suffering and all manner of torture without ever leaving God. When they are obedient unto death, and have great faith in God, then this stage of God’s work is complete”** (Follow the Lamb and Sing New Songs, What God Makes Perfect Is Faith). God’s words filled me with faith and strength. I didn’t waver at all, no matter what my husband said. Finally,

he dropped this bomb on me: “If you just refuse to listen, we should get a divorce!” The word “divorce” shattered my heart. I knew that if it weren’t for the Communist Party lying and blaspheming God’s work, threatening, coercing, and sowing discord, he never would have said something so heartless. I detested the Party more than ever. It was the main culprit in pushing our family to the brink! They wanted to exploit my feelings and the draw of my family to get me to betray God—I absolutely couldn’t fall for their ploy. After thinking this through, I calmly responded, “You can take our son and leave.” Seeing how everything they were trying was failing, an officer paced angrily in front of the desk and shouted at me, “We’ve put so much into this without getting a single word out of you! If you don’t open that trap, you’ll be labeled a political criminal. Today’s your last chance to talk!” But no matter how they raged at me, I stayed quiet, praying to God the entire time, asking Him to help me stay resolute in my faith.

I mulled over what my husband had said when I was back in my cell. It seemed he really was prepared to divorce me—I’d lose my home, and I still didn’t know how long my sentence was going to be. I was utterly miserable. Just then, some of God’s words came to mind: **“Now you should be able to clearly see the precise path that Peter took. If you can clearly see Peter’s path, then you will be certain about the work being done today, so you will not complain or be passive, or long for anything. You should experience Peter’s mood at the time: He was stricken with sorrow; he no longer asked for a future or any blessings. He did not seek profit, happiness, fame, or fortune in the world; he only sought to live the most meaningful life, which was to repay God’s love and dedicate what he held utterly most precious to God. Then he would be satisfied in his heart”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. How Peter Came to Know Jesus). Peter’s accomplishments were deeply moving for me. It

was true—Peter spent his life seeking to love and satisfy God, without giving the slightest consideration to his own future and destiny, to his own interests. He was crucified upside down in the end, serving as a beautiful, resounding witness for God. I was fortunate to be able to follow God incarnate and enjoy the sustenance and leadership of His words, but I'd never offered up anything to God. The moment had come that I needed to stand witness—I absolutely had to satisfy God now. Wouldn't I be left with a lifelong regret if I missed this chance? At that, I prayed to God, "God, I want to do as Peter did. No matter what I may face next, even if it's divorce, even if it's prison, I'm ready to stand witness and please You, and even if I spend the rest of my days in prison, I will not bow down to Satan and betray You." When I truly offered up everything, I saw God's wondrous deeds. A few days later, a correctional officer said to me out of the blue, "Get your stuff together. You're going home." I simply couldn't believe my ears. I was thrilled. Satan had been shamed and defeated in that spiritual battle, and God resoundingly glorified!

Over the 36 days of persecution that I endured, I fully and clearly saw the Chinese Communist Party's evil, reactionary essence—it's vicious and tyrannical, and totally contrary to Heaven. I came to despise and reject it from the bottom of my heart. Throughout this ordeal, it was God's words that enlightened and guided me, allowing me to triumph over Satan's attacks and temptations time after time. I genuinely experienced that it is God's words that are mankind's very life and strength, and I realized that God rules over all, that everything is within His grasp. No matter how many tricks Satan tries to play, it will always be vanquished at God's hands. Even though it tortured my flesh to force me to betray God, its cruelty not only failed to break me, but actually opened my eyes to its evil countenance. I came to know God's love and salvation, thoroughly rejected Satan, and

became steadfast in my faith and in following God. God's wisdom will always triumph over Satan's schemes. I give heartfelt thanks to God!

84. Unbreakable Faith

By Meng Yong, China

In December 2012, several brothers and sisters and I drove to a place to spread the gospel, and ended up being reported by wicked people. Not long after, the county government deployed officers from the criminal police brigade, national security forces, the anti-drug squad, armed police forces, and the local police station, to come around in more than 10 police vehicles to arrest us. When a brother and I were just about to drive away, four policemen ran over quickly and cut off our car. One of them pulled out the car key and ordered us to stay in the car and not move. By then, I saw that seven or eight policemen wielding batons were furiously beating another brother, and that brother had already been beaten to the point that he was unable to move. I could not help but be filled with righteous indignation and rushed out of the car, trying to stop their violence, but the policemen held me back. Later, they took us to the police station, and our car was also impounded.

After nine o'clock that night, two criminal policemen came to interrogate me. When they saw that they could not get any useful information out of me, they grew flustered and exasperated, gnashing their teeth in anger as they cursed: "Damn it, we'll take care of you later!" They then locked me in the interrogation waiting room. At 11:30 p.m., they took me into a room without surveillance cameras. I had a feeling they were going to use violence against me, so I started praying to God repeatedly in my heart, begging for God to protect me. At this time, a police officer surnamed Jia came to interrogate me: "Have you been in a Volkswagen Jetta in these last few days?" I answered no, and he furiously yelled: "Other people have already seen you, and yet you still deny it?" After saying it, he

slapped me viciously across the face. All I felt was the burning pain on my cheek. He then roared loudly: “Let’s see how tough you are!” He picked up a wide belt as he spoke and kept whipping it across my face, I don’t know how many times I was whipped, but I could not help but scream out in pain time and time again. Upon seeing this, they pulled the belt around my mouth. A few policemen then put a quilt over my body before beating me furiously with their batons, only stopping when they became too tired to catch their breath. I had been beaten so badly that my head was spinning and my body hurt like every bone had scattered apart. At the time I did not know why they were beating me up in this way, but later on I found out that they had put a quilt over me to prevent the beating from leaving marks on my flesh. Putting me in a room without surveillance, gagging my mouth, and covering me with a quilt—it was all because they were afraid that their wicked deeds would be exposed. The Chinese Communist Party police are so treacherous and vicious! When the four of them got tired from beating me, they changed to another method to torture me: Two policemen twisted one of my arms back and forcefully tugged it upward, while another two policemen lifted my other arm over the shoulder to the back and pulled it down hard. (They called this type of torture method “Carrying a Sword on the Back,” which an average person would not be able to endure at all.) But my two hands could not be pulled together no matter what, so they drove a vicious knee into my arm. All I heard was a “click,” and my two arms felt like they had been torn off. It hurt so much that I nearly expired. It did not take long for me to lose sensation in both my hands. This was still not enough for them to give up, so they ordered me to squat on the floor to add to my suffering. I was in so much pain that my whole body broke out in a cold sweat, my head was ringing, and my consciousness began to grow a little blurry. I thought: “Over all these years in my life, I’ve never had the

feeling of being unable to control my own consciousness. Am I about to die?” Later on, I really couldn’t take it anymore, so I thought of seeking relief through death. In that moment, the words of God enlightened me from within: **“Today, most people do not have that knowledge. They believe that suffering is without value.... The suffering of some people reaches an extreme, and their thoughts turn to death. This is not true love for God; such people are cowards, they have no perseverance, they are weak and powerless!”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Only by Experiencing Painful Trials Can You Know the Loveliness of God). God’s words made me suddenly awaken and realize that my way of thinking was not in line with God’s will and would only make God sad and disappointed. Because amid this pain and tribulation, what God wanted to see was not me seeking death, but that I could rely on God’s guidance to battle Satan, to bear witness to God, and make Satan ashamed and defeated. Seeking death would be falling right into Satan’s scheme, and it couldn’t be considered bearing witness for God, but would instead become a mark of shame. After understanding God’s intentions, I prayed to God silently: “Oh God! Reality has shown that my nature is too weak. I don’t have the will and courage to suffer for You and wanted to die just because of a bit of physical pain. Now I don’t want to escape it and I must stand witness and satisfy You no matter how much suffering I have to endure. But at this time, my body is in extreme pain and weak, and I know that it is very difficult to overcome the beatings of these demons on my own. Please give me more confidence and strength so that I can rely on You to defeat Satan. I swear on my life that I will not betray You or sell out my brothers and sisters.” As I repeatedly prayed to God, my heart slowly became at ease. The wicked police saw that I was barely breathing and were afraid they would have to bear responsibility if I died, so they came to release my handcuffs. But my arms

had already stiffened, and the cuffs were so tight that they became very hard to undo. The four wicked policemen took several minutes to release the handcuffs before dragging me back to the interrogation waiting room.

The next afternoon, the police arbitrarily pinned a “criminal offense” on me and took me back to my home to raid it, and then sent me to a detention house. As soon as I entered the detention house, four correctional officers confiscated my cotton-padded jacket, trousers, boots, and watch, as well as the 1,300 yuan in cash I had on me. They made me change into their standard prison uniform and forced me to spend 200 yuan to buy a quilt from them. Afterward, the correctional officers locked me up with robbers, murderers, rapists, and drug smugglers. When I entered my cell, I saw twelve bald prisoners eyeing me with hostility. The atmosphere was gloomy and terrifying, and I felt my heart suddenly rise up to my throat. Two of the heads of the cell walked up to me and asked: “What are you in here for?” I said: “Spreading the gospel.” Without another word, one of them slapped me across the face twice, and said: “You’re a religious head, aren’t you?” The other prisoners all started laughing savagely and mocked me by asking: “Why don’t you let your God rescue you from here?” Amid the jeering and the ridiculing, the cell head slapped me across the face a few more times. From then on, they nicknamed me “religious head” and often humiliated and mocked me. The other cell head saw the slippers I was wearing and arrogantly shouted: “You don’t know your own place at all. Are you worthy of wearing these shoes? Take them off!” As he said it, he forced me to take them off and change into a pair of their worn-out slippers. He also gave away my quilt to the other prisoners. Those prisoners fought back and forth for my quilt, and in the end left me with an old quilt that was thin, torn, dirty, and smelly. Instigated by the correctional officers, these prisoners subjected me to all sorts of hardships and torment. The light was always on

in the cell at night, but a cell head said to me with an evil grin: “Turn that light off for me.” As I could not do it (there wasn’t even a switch), they started laughing at me and mocking me again. The next day, a few juvenile prisoners forced me to stand in a corner and memorize the prison rules, threatening: “You’re going to get it if you don’t memorize it within two days!” I could not help but be terrified, and the more I thought about what I had been through the last few days, the more frightened I became. So I kept calling out to God and begging for Him to protect me so I could overcome it. At this moment, I thought of a hymn of God’s words: **“When trials come, you can still love God; whether you face imprisonment, illness, ridicule, or slander from others, or seem to have no way out, you can still love God. This means your heart has turned to God”** (Follow the Lamb and Sing New Songs, Has Your Heart Turned to God?). God’s word gave me power and pointed out a path for me to practice—seeking to love God and turning my heart to God! In that moment, it suddenly became crystal clear in my heart: God allowing this suffering to befall me was not to torment me or intentionally make me suffer, but to train me to turn my heart to God in such an environment, so that I can resist the control of Satan’s dark influences and so my heart can still be close to God and love God, never complaining, always accepting and obeying God’s orchestrations and arrangements. With this in my mind, I was no longer afraid. No matter how the police and prisoners treated me, all I shall care about was giving myself to God; I would never yield to Satan.

Life in prison is practically hell on earth. The prisoners were instigated by the prison guards to use various ways to torture me: When I was sleeping at night, they would crowd up against me so I could hardly turn over, and they made me sleep right up against the toilet. After being captured, I didn’t sleep for several days and became so sleepy that I

couldn't take it and would doze off. The prisoners on duty who were standing guard would come to harass me, intentionally flicking me on the head until I woke up before they would leave. There was a prisoner who deliberately woke me up and tried to take my long johns. After breakfast the next day, the cell head demanded I scrub the floors every day. These were the coldest days of the year and there was no hot water, so I could only use cold water for the cleaning cloth. Then, several convicted robbers made me memorize the prison rules. If I couldn't memorize them, they would punch and kick me; getting slapped in the face was even more common. Facing such an environment, I felt very miserable. At night, I pulled my quilt over my head and prayed silently: "Oh God, You allowed this environment to befall me, so Your good intentions must lie therein. Please reveal Your intentions to me." At that moment, God's words enlightened me: **"I admire the lilies blooming in the hills; the flowers and grasses stretch across the slopes, but the lilies add luster to My glory on earth before the arrival of spring—can man achieve such things? Could he testify to Me on earth prior to My return? Could he dedicate himself for the sake of My name in the country of the great red dragon?"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God's Words to the Entire Universe, Chapter 34). As I was pondering God's words, I thought to myself: "The flowers and grass and I are all God's creation. God created us to manifest Him, to glorify Him. The lilies are able to add luster to God's glory on earth before the spring arrives, meaning they have fulfilled their responsibility as a creation of God. My duty today is to obey God's orchestration and to bear witness to God before Satan. Today I am subject to persecution and humiliation because of my faith, but this is suffering for the sake of righteousness and it is glorious. The more Satan humiliates me, the more I have to stand on God's side and love God. That way, God can gain glory,

and I would have fulfilled the duty I should have fulfilled. As long as God is happy and pleased, my heart will also receive comfort. I am willing to endure the final suffering to satisfy God and submit to God's orchestrations in all things." When I started to think this way, I felt especially moved in my heart, and was once again unable to control my tears. I prayed to God silently: "Oh God, You truly are worthy of love! I have followed You for so many years, but never had I felt Your tender affection like I have today, or felt as close to You as I do today." I completely forgot my own suffering and became immersed in this moving feeling for a long, long time ...

Temperatures were very low on the sixth day in the detention house. As the wicked police had confiscated my cotton-padded coat, I only wore a set of long johns and ended up catching a cold. I came down with a high fever and also could not stop coughing. At night, I wrapped myself up in a worn quilt, enduring the torment of illness while also thinking about the endless mistreatment and abuse of the prisoners toward me. I felt very desolate and helpless. Just as my misery reached a great extent, I thought of Peter's genuine and sincere prayer before God: **"If You give me sickness and take my freedom, I can continue living, but if Your chastisement and judgment were to ever leave me, I would have no way to go on living. If I were without Your chastisement and judgment, I would have lost Your love, a love that is too deep for me to put into words. Without Your love, I would live under the domain of Satan, and would be unable to see Your glorious face. How could I continue living?"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Experiences of Peter: His Knowledge of Chastisement and Judgment). These words gave me faith and strength. Peter thought nothing of physical suffering. What he treasured, what he really cared about, was God's judgment and chastisement. What he pursued was to experience God's judgment and chastisement so he could be cleansed and

ultimately achieve obedience even until death, and the ultimate love for God. I knew that I had to adopt the same pursuit as Peter, that God had allowed me to be placed in that situation. Even though I was experiencing physical suffering, it was God's love coming upon me. God wanted to perfect my faith and my resolve in the face of suffering. I was really moved once I'd understood God's earnest intentions, and I hated how weak-kneed, how selfish I was. I felt I owed God an enormous debt for not being considerate of His will, and I swore that no matter how great my suffering, I would stand witness and satisfy God. The next day, my high fever miraculously receded. I gave thanks to God in my heart.

One night, a vendor came to the window and the cell head bought a lot of ham, dog meat, chicken thighs, and so forth. In the end, he ordered me to pay. I said I didn't have the money, so he said viciously: "If you don't have the money, I will slowly torment you!" The next day, he made me wash the bed sheets, clothes, and socks. The correctional officers in the detention house also made me wash their socks. In the detention house, I had to endure their beatings nearly every day. Whenever I could bear it no longer, I would think of God's words: **"You must, during your time on earth, do your final duty for God. In the past, Peter was crucified upside down for the sake of God; but you should satisfy God in the end, and exhaust all your energy for His sake. What can a created being do on behalf of God? You should therefore give yourself up to God, sooner rather than later, for Him to dispose of you as He wishes. As long as it makes God happy and pleased, then let Him do as He will with you. What right do men have to speak words of complaint?"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Interpretations of the Mysteries of "God's Words to the Entire Universe", Chapter 41). God's words gave me power. Even though from time to time I would still be subject to the attacks, abuse, condemnation, and beatings of the prisoners,

with the guidance of God's words, I was comforted inside and didn't feel painful anymore.

One time, a correctional officer took me to their office. I saw more than a dozen people staring at me with peculiar looks. One of them held a video camera in front of me to my left, while another walked up to me with a microphone, asking: "Why do you believe in Almighty God?" That was when I realized that this was a media interview, so I answered with proud humility: "Since I was little, I have often been subject to people's bullying and cold shoulders, and I've seen people mutually deceive and take advantage of each other. I felt that this society was too dark, too perilous; people were living empty and helpless lives, with nothing to look forward to and with no life goals. Later, when someone preached the gospel of Almighty God to me, I started believing in it. After believing in Almighty God, I have felt other believers treat me like family. No one in The Church of Almighty God plots against me. Everyone is mutually understanding and caring. They look after each other, and are not afraid to speak what's on their minds. In Almighty God's word I have found the purpose and value of life. I think believing in God is pretty good." The reporter then asked: "Do you know why you are here?" I responded: "Since believing in Almighty God, I saw that God's word can truly save and cleanse people and lead them to take the right path in life. Hence, I decided to tell this good news to other people, but I never knew that such a good deed would be banned in China. And so I was arrested and brought here." The reporter saw that my responses were not advantageous toward them, so he immediately stopped the interview and left. At that moment, the deputy head of the National Security Brigade was so furious that he kept stomping his feet. He stared at me viciously, gnashed his teeth and said: "You just wait and see!" But I was not at all afraid of his threats or intimidation. Conversely, I felt deeply

honored to have been able to bear witness to God on such an occasion, and moreover I gave glory to God for the exaltation of God's name and the defeat of Satan.

Later the police officer in charge of my case interrogated me again. This time, he did not use torture to try to force a confession, and instead changed to using a "kind" face to ask me: "Who is your leader? I'll give you another chance. If you tell us, you'll be all right. I will show you great leniency. You were actually innocent, but other people ratted you out. So why cover for them? You seem like such a nice person. Why give your life for them? If you tell us, you can go home. Why stay here and suffer?" These two-faced hypocrites saw that the hard approach didn't work, so they decided to try the soft approach. They really are full of cunning tricks and masters of machinations and maneuvers! That hypocritical face of his filled my heart with hate for this pack of demons. I said to him: "I've told you everything I know. I don't know anything else." He saw my resolute stance and that he couldn't get anything out of me; he walked away dejectedly.

After being held at the detention house for half a month, I was released only after the police asked my family to pay 8,000 yuan in bond money. But they warned me not to go anywhere and that I must stay at home and guarantee to be on call. Later, on a groundless accusation of "disturbing social order," the CCP got me sentenced to a one-year fixed-term imprisonment, suspended for two years.

After experiencing this persecution and tribulation, I had an understanding and could discern the devilish face and the evil essence of the atheist Communist Party of China, and developed a deep-seated hatred toward it. It uses violence and lies to protect its own position of dominance; it madly suppresses and persecutes the people who believe in God. It uses

every trick in the book to hinder and disrupt God's work on earth, and hates the truth to an extreme. It is the greatest enemy of God and also the enemy of those of us who are believers. After going through this tribulation, I can see that only God's word can bring people life. When I was at my most desperate or at the brink of death, it was God's word that gave me faith and courage, and allowed me to tenaciously hold on to life. Thank God for protecting me through those darkest, most difficult days. His love for me is too great!

85. A Time of Brutal Torture

By Chen Hui, China

I grew up in an ordinary family in China. My father was in the military and because I had been molded and influenced by him from an early age, I came to believe that a soldier's calling and duty was to serve the motherland, follow orders and selflessly serve on behalf of the Communist Party and the people. I also became determined to become a soldier myself and follow in my father's footsteps. However, as time went on and certain events transpired, the course of my life and the orientation of my pursuits were slowly altered. In 1983, I heard the gospel of the Lord Jesus. It was the special guidance of the Holy Spirit that allowed someone like me, who had been poisoned by atheism and Chinese Communist ideology from an early age, to be deeply moved by the Lord Jesus' love. Having heard the gospel, I embarked on a life of belief in God—I began attending church, praying, and singing hymns in praise of the Lord. This new life brought me great serenity and peace. In 1999, I accepted the gospel of the last days of the returned Lord Jesus—Almighty God. Through ceaselessly reading God's word and meeting and fellowshiping with my brothers and sisters, I came to understand many truths and learned of God's urgent intention to save mankind. I felt that God had bestowed on each of us a great vocation and responsibility, and so I eagerly threw myself into the work of spreading the gospel.

However, the cruel persecution of the CCP government shattered my serene and happy life. In August of 2002, I traveled to the northwest with my husband to spread the gospel to a few of our co-workers in the Lord. One night, while I was meeting with two brothers and sisters who had only recently accepted God's work in the last days, I suddenly heard a loud crash

and saw the door being violently kicked down and six or seven fiendish-looking police wielding batons rush in. One of the policemen pointed at me and said with a vicious snarl, “Handcuff her!” Two policemen ordered us to stand by the wall and not to move, while they began to rummage through the boxes and chests in the house like a bunch of raiding bandits. They carefully searched anything that they suspected might be used to conceal things and, in no time, they had turned the whole place inside out and upside down. Finally, one of the policemen found a gospel pamphlet and a book of God’s word in my sister’s bag and glared at me with a fierce stare, yelling, “Damnit, are you looking to get yourself killed? Coming up here and spreading your gospel. Where did this come from?” I didn’t respond and so he barked at me saying, “Not gonna talk, eh? We’ll open that mouth of yours. Get moving! You’ll talk where we’re going!” With that he dragged me out of the house and threw me into a police car. At that time, I realized that they hadn’t just sent six or seven policemen—the road outside was lined on either side with many armed special police. When I saw how much manpower they had deployed to apprehend us, I became very frightened and, without thinking, began praying to God asking for His guidance and protection. Not long after, a passage of God’s word came to my mind, **“You know that all things in the environment that surrounds you are there by My permission, all planned by Me. See clearly and satisfy My heart in the environment I have given to you. Do not fear, the Almighty God of hosts will surely be with you; He stands behind you and He is your shield”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 26). “That’s right!” I thought. “God is my pillar; no matter what kind of situation I may encounter, God, the Ruler and Creator of all things, is always by my side. He will lead me to overcome whatever situation I may face. For, He is faithful and it is He who rules over

and orchestrates all things.” Thinking these things, I regained my sense of calm.

It was around ten o’clock that night when I was brought to the Criminal Police Brigade. My photo was taken, and I was then led into an interrogation room. To my surprise, there were already four or five brutish-looking thugs in there staring me down as I came in. As soon as I entered the room, they surrounded me like a pack of hungry wolves seemingly rearing for the kill. I was incredibly nervous and prayed desperately to God. At first, these police thugs didn’t lay a finger on me, but just ordered me to remain standing for three or four hours. I stood so long that my legs and feet started to ache with pain and go numb, and my whole body became extremely fatigued. At around one or two in the morning, the chief of the Criminal Police Brigade came in to interrogate me. I couldn’t help but shake with nerves. He stared at me and began to grill me saying, “Speak! Where are you from? Who is your contact here? Who is your superior? Where have you been meeting? How many people do you have working under you?” When I didn’t speak, he blew up in fury, grabbing me by the hair and raining down punches and kicks. Once I had been beaten to the ground, he continued to kick me even harder. Right away my ears started to ring so that I couldn’t hear a thing, and my head felt like it was going to explode with stabbing pain. I couldn’t help but cry out in pain. After a few more moments of struggle, I lay on the floor, unable to move. The chief grabbed me by the hair again and dragged me to a standing position, at which point four or five of those brutish thugs swarmed around me and began kicking and punching me; I fell to the ground, my hands covering my head, rolling and lashing around in pain. These police thugs weren’t holding anything back—every kick and every punch had deadly force. As they hit me, they yelled, “Are you gonna talk or not? I dare you not to talk! Talk or

you're dead!" When the chief saw that I still wasn't talking, he kicked me viciously in the ankle. Every time he kicked me, it felt like someone had driven a nail into my bones, it was excruciatingly painful. After that, they continued to kick me all over until I felt like they had shattered every bone in my body, and the violent spasms that wracked my insides caused me so much pain that I could hardly draw breath. I lay on the ground gasping for air and crying tears of pure agony. In my heart, I called out to God saying, "Dear God! I can't go on. Please protect me as I fear I won't make it through this night. Dear God, grant me strength. ..." I don't know how long the torture went on. I just felt extremely dizzy and I was in such excruciating pain that I felt as if I had been rent limb for limb. The pain was so intense that I actually became numb all over. One of the police thugs said, "Looks like you still haven't had enough. Oh, you'll talk alright!" As he spoke, he picked up what looked like an electric hammer and slammed it against my forehead. I felt every strike deep down in my marrow, and each time he hit me my whole body would go numb, and then I would go limp and tremble ceaselessly. When they saw how much I was suffering, they seemed pleased with their work and started to bellow with laughter. In the midst of my suffering, a passage of God's word gave me guidance and enlightenment: **"You must suffer hardship for the truth, you must give yourself to the truth, you must endure humiliation for the truth, and to gain more of the truth you must undergo more suffering. This is what you should do"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Experiences of Peter: His Knowledge of Chastisement and Judgment). God's word gave me incredible strength, and I repeated the passage over and over in my mind. I thought: "I cannot succumb to Satan and disappoint God. In order to obtain the truth, I vow to endure any suffering, and even if it means my death, it will still be worth it and I will not have lived in vain!" This gang of demons

interrogated me all through the night until the following morning, but because I had God's word to encourage me, I was able to withstand their torture. In the end, they had exhausted every last strategy they could think of and said helplessly, "You seem like an ordinary housewife with no particular talents, so how did your God give you such tremendous strength?" I knew that it wasn't me these police thugs were relenting to, but instead they were surrendering under the authority and power of God. I personally witnessed that God's word is the truth, that it can imbue people with immense strength, and that by practicing in accordance with God's word one can overcome their fear of death and vanquish Satan. As a result of all this, my faith in God grew even stronger.

On the morning of the second day at around seven, the chief came to interrogate me again. When he saw that I still wasn't willing to speak, he tried to lure me in with yet another cunning trick. A balding, plainclothes policeman came in, helped me get up, and escorted me over to a sofa. He smoothed out my clothes, patted me on the shoulder and, feigning concern, said with a false smile, "Look at you, there's no point in suffering this way. Just talk to us and then you can go home. Why stay here and endure all this torment? Your children are waiting for you at home. Do you know how much it hurts me to see you suffer like this?" Listening to all his lies and looking at that detestable, shameless face, I ground my teeth in anger and thought to myself, "You're just a demon who spouts all kinds of lies to deceive me. Don't you think for one minute that I'm going to betray God! Don't you even dream that I'm going to say one word about the church!" When the policeman saw that I remained unmoved, he fixed me with a lascivious stare and began to paw at me with his hand. I automatically moved away from him, but that scoundrel held me with one hand so that I couldn't move and then he gripped my chest with his other hand. I cried out

in pain and felt immense hatred for this man; I was so angry that my whole body shook and tears came streaming down my cheeks. I cast a rage-filled glare at him and, seeing the look in my eyes, he let go of me. Through this personal experience, I truly witnessed the evil, reactionary and cruel nature of the CCP government. I saw how the “People’s Police” working for the institution of the CCP were really just despicable, shameless thugs and low-lives without any conscience at all! Because I hadn’t had a drop of water for 24 hours, my body was dangerously exhausted and depleted and I really wasn’t sure if I could go on any longer. I was suddenly struck by a feeling of profound misery and hopelessness. At that moment, I thought of a church hymn. “Though oppressed and arrested by the great red dragon, I am even more resolved to follow God. I see how evil the great red dragon is; how can it tolerate God? God has come in the flesh—how could I not follow Him? I forsake Satan, and follow God with an iron will. Wherever the devil is in power, arduous is the path of believing in God. Satan snaps at my heels; there is no safe place to reside. Believing in and worshiping God is absolutely the right thing to do. Having chosen to love God, I will be faithful till the end. The devil’s tricks are savage, vicious, and truly contemptible. Having gained a clear view of Satan’s visage, I love Christ even more. I will never give in to Satan or eke out a worthless existence. I will suffer all torment, hardship, and pain, and endure through the darkest of nights. To bring God comfort, I will bear victorious witness and shame Satan” (Follow the Lamb and Sing New Songs, Rising Up Amidst Darkness and Oppression). This sonorous and forceful hymn was great motivation for me: These demons were persecuting the believers of God in this way because they hate God. Their dastardly and evil goal is to stop us from believing in and following God and thus disrupt and destroy God’s work and ruin mankind’s chance to be saved. In this key moment of this spiritual battle, I couldn’t lay

down and let myself be the butt of Satan's joke. The more Satan tormented me, the more clearly I saw its demonic face and the more I wanted to forsake it and stand on the side of God. I believe that God shall overcome, and that Satan is doomed to fall in defeat. I couldn't give up, and I wished to rely upon God and bear a strong and resounding testimony for Him.

When the police realized that they wouldn't be getting any information of value from me, they gave up on the interrogation and, that evening, they transported me to a detention house. At that point, I had been beaten beyond recognition—my face was swollen, I couldn't open my eyes and my lips were covered in sores. The prison guards at the detention house took one look at me and, seeing that I had nearly been beaten to death, they didn't want any responsibility for what had happened and refused to accept me. However, after some negotiation, I was finally let in at around seven that evening and I was escorted to a cell.

That night, I ate my first meal since being arrested: a hard, black, and gritty steamed bun that was hard to chew and difficult to swallow, and a bowl of soup of wilted vegetables with dead worms floating in it and a layer of dirt at the bottom of the bowl. None of that stopped me from scarfing down that meal as fast as I could. Because I was a believer, in the days that followed, the correctional officer would often goad the other inmates to make my life hell. One time, the head prisoner of our cell issued a command and her underlings grabbed me by the hair and slammed my head against the wall. They slammed my head so hard that I felt dizzy and couldn't see straight. Also, at night they wouldn't allow me to sleep on the bed and so I had to sleep on the cold concrete floor next to the toilet. What's more, the prison guards made me recite the rules of the detention house and, if I recited them wrong or forgot them, they whipped me with a leather belt. Faced with this nearly constant inhuman torture and humiliation, I became

weak, and thought that it would be better to just die than suffer like a caged animal day in and day out. On many occasions, just as I was on the verge of slamming my head against a wall and ending it, God's words would guide me, saying, **"During these last days you must bear testimony to God. No matter how great your suffering, you should walk until the very end, and even at your last breath, still you must be faithful to God and at the mercy of God; only this is truly loving God, and only this is the strong and resounding testimony"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Only by Experiencing Painful Trials Can You Know the Loveliness of God). God's words provided me with encouragement and warmed my heart. As I pondered God's words, tears poured from my eyes. I thought of how when I was being viciously beaten by the police thugs, it was God's love that had cared for me all the while, He had guided me with His words, and He had given me faith and strength, and allowed me to obstinately survive through that awful torture. After having been abused and bullied by the head prisoner of our cell and tortured by the other inmates to the point where I nearly had a nervous breakdown and was contemplating ending my own life, God's words once again gave me the faith and courage to rise up anew. If God hadn't been by my side, watching over me, I would have been tormented to death by those villainous fiends long ago. In the face of God's great love and mercy, I could no longer passively resist and cause grief to God's heart. I had to stand firm with God and repay God's love with loyalty. Unexpectedly, once I had remedied my state of mind, God caused another inmate to rise up and protest on my behalf and she and the head prisoner got into a big fight. Ultimately, the head prisoner relented and allowed me to sleep on the bed. Thanks be to God. Were it not for God's mercy, sleeping long-term on the wet, cold concrete floor would have killed me or left me paralyzed, given my weak constitution. In this way, I managed to survive

through two grueling months in the detention house. During that time, police thugs questioned me twice more using the same good cop, bad cop strategy. Yet, with God's protection, I was able to see through Satan's cunning plot and foil their wicked scheme. In the end, they simply ran out of strategies and, after all their failed interrogations, they finally sentenced me to three years' imprisonment and sent me to the Second Women's Prison to serve out my sentence.

From the first day I arrived at the prison, I was forced to perform exhausting physical labor. I had to work over ten hours a day, and I had to knit one sweater, or make thirty to forty articles of clothing, or package ten-thousand pairs of chopsticks every single day. If I was unable to complete these tasks, my prison term would be extended. As if the extreme physical labor was not exhausting enough, at night we were forced to partake in a kind of political brainwashing intended to break our spirits, in which we were made to study prison rules, the law, Marxism-Leninism, and Mao Zedong Thought. Whenever I heard the correctional officers propounding their atheist absurdities I would feel sick to my stomach and feel pure hatred for their despicable, shameless ways. The entire time I was in prison, I never had a single night of sound sleep—we would often be startled from our sleep in the middle of the night by the whistles of the prison guards. They would either make us get up and stand in the corridor for no apparent reason or assign us tasks like hauling potatoes, corn and feed. Each bag weighed over 50 kilograms. During winter nights, we had to contend with howling, bone-chilling winds. We'd creep and hobble our way along, one foot at a time, sometimes even collapsing under the weight of our loads. Often, I would drag my weary body back to my cell at two or three in the morning, exhausted and teary-eyed. On such nights, a mixture of fatigue, cold and anger would keep me from falling back to sleep. Whenever I

thought about how I still had to endure three long years of imprisonment, I would fall even deeper into despair and my whole body would feel paralyzed with exhaustion. God was well aware of my suffering, and at my lowest points, He guided me to remember this passage of His words, **“Do not be discouraged, do not be weak, and I will make things clear for you. The road to the kingdom is not so smooth; nothing is that simple! You want blessings to come to you easily, do you not? Today, everyone will have bitter trials to face. Without such trials, the loving heart you have for Me will not grow stronger and you will not have true love for Me. Even if these trials consist merely of minor circumstances, everyone must pass through them; it’s just that the difficulty of the trials will vary from one person to another”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 41). God’s words were a deep comfort for my aggrieved and suffering heart and they allowed me to understand His will. The situation I now found myself in was a real test. God wanted to see if I would remain loyal to Him in the midst of such suffering and whether or not I truly loved Him. Though three years in jail was a very long time, with God’s word to guide me and God’s love to support me, I knew I wasn’t alone. I would rely upon God to endure all of the pain and suffering and overcome Satan. I couldn’t allow myself to become timid.

The darkness and evil of the CCP government were apparent in every aspect of this prison that they oversaw, but God’s love was always with me. One time, a prison guard ordered me to haul a bag of chopsticks up to the fifth floor. Because the stairs were covered in ice, I had to walk very slowly due to the weight of the bag. However, the guard kept telling me to hurry up and, fearing that I would be badly beaten if I didn’t complete my assignment, I became anxious and slipped in my haste, falling down the

stairs and breaking my heel bone. I lay sprawled out on the floor, unable to move my leg and in a cold sweat due to the shooting pain from the break. The guard showed not the least bit of interest, however. She said I was faking it and ordered me to get up and keep working, but I was physically unable to stand. A sister from the church, who was serving time in the same prison as me, saw what had happened and immediately carried me over to the prison clinic. At the clinic, the attending doctor just simply bandaged up my foot, gave me a few pills of some cheap medicine and sent me on my way. Afraid that I wouldn't be able to meet my work quota, the prison guard refused to allow me any treatment, so I had to keep working with my broken foot. Wherever we were going to work, the sister would carry me on her back over there. Because the love of God had bound our hearts together, whenever she had the opportunity, the sister would fellowship on God's word with me to encourage me. This was an immense comfort to me at my lowest and most difficult moments. During that period, I don't know how many times I felt so pained and weak that I could hardly get up, and barely had the energy to breathe, and so many times I would hide in the quilt tearfully praying to God, but these two hymns always provided me with encouragement and solace: **"That you are able to accept the judgment, chastisement, smiting, and refinement of God's words, and, moreover, are able to accept God's commissions, was predestined by God before the ages, and thus you must not be too distressed when you are chastised. No one can take away the work that has been done in you, and the blessings that have been bestowed upon you, and no one can take away all that has been given to you. People of religion brook no comparison with you. You are not possessed of great expertise in the Bible, and are not equipped with religious theory, but because God has worked within you, you have gained more than anyone throughout the**

ages—and so this is your greatest blessing” (Follow the Lamb and Sing New Songs, You Cannot Disappoint God’s Will). “The road to the kingdom is a rocky one with many ups and downs. From death to life amid countless tortures and tears. Without God’s guidance and protection, who could make it to today? Born in the last days, I’m fortunate to follow Christ, which is God’s ruling and arrangement. God humbles Himself to become the Son of man, and He suffers enormous humiliation. God has suffered so much, how can I be called human if I do not love Him? ... Having stepped onto the path of loving God, I will never regret following Him and testifying to Him. Although I can be weak and negative, with tears my heart still loves God. I endure suffering and give my love to God, never again to cause Him grief. Being tempered in tribulation is as good as gold being tried by fire; how could I not dedicate my heart? The road to heaven is a hard and rocky one. There will be tears, but I shall love God ever deeper and shall have no regrets” (Follow the Lamb and Sing New Songs, Song of Loving God Without Regrets). God’s words and God’s love saved me from the depths of hopelessness and, time and again, gave me the courage to keep on living. In this cold, dark, hell on earth, I experienced the warmth and protection of God’s love, and I was determined to keep on living so that I could repay God’s love. No matter how greatly I suffered, I had to continue on; even if I had only one breath remaining, I had to remain loyal to God. In my three years in prison, I was most deeply moved when my sister gave me some handwritten pages of God’s word. That I was able to read God’s word in a prison run by devils that was clamped down tighter than Fort Knox was truly a testament to the immense love and mercy God was showing to me. It was these words of God that encouraged and guided me, allowing me to endure those most trying of times.

In September of 2005, my term came to an end and I could finally put the dark days of prison behind me. As I walked out of jail, I took a deep breath and thanked God from the bottom of my heart for His love and protection, which had allowed me to survive through my prison term. Because of my personal experience of being arrested and persecuted by the CCP government, I now know what is righteous and what is evil, what is good and what is wicked, and what is positive and what is negative. I know what I should abandon everything to pursue and what I should reject with hatred and curses. Through this experience, I truly came to know that God's word is God's own life and is invested with supernatural powers that can be the driving motivation behind man's life. As long as man lives by God's word, he is capable of overcoming all of Satan's forces and can prevail even in the most adverse of circumstances. Thanks be to God!

86. Day After Day in a CCP Prison

By Yang Yi, China

Almighty God says, “In many places, God has prophesied that He will be gaining a group of overcomers in the land of Sinim. Since it is in the world’s East that overcomers are to be gained, so the place where God sets foot in His second incarnation is without a doubt the land of Sinim, the exact spot where the great red dragon lies coiled. There, God will gain the descendants of the great red dragon so that it is thoroughly defeated and shamed. God is going to awaken these people, heavily burdened with suffering, to rouse them till they are fully awake, and to make them walk out of the fog and reject the great red dragon. They will wake from their dream, recognize the substance of the great red dragon, become able to give their whole heart to God, rise up from the oppression of the dark forces, stand up in the East of the world, and become proof of God’s victory. Only in this way will God gain glory”

(The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Work and Entry (6)). After reading these words, I thought of my arrest by the Chinese Communist Party about a decade ago.

It was January 23, 2004, I got up early to visit a sister from the church. However, I was illegally arrested by the CCP police on my way there. They rifled through my bag and found some faith materials, a cell phone and a pager, and so on. Later they took me to the Public Security Bureau. When we arrived there, the police led me into a room. One of them fiddled with my pager and cell phone, looking for clues. He turned on the phone but it showed low battery, then the battery was completely dead. Try as he might, he couldn’t get it to turn on. Holding the phone, he looked worried. I was puzzled too—I’d just charged the phone that morning. How could it have

no power? I suddenly realized that God had miraculously arranged this to stop the police from finding any information about the other brothers and sisters. I also understood the words spoken by God: **“Any and all things, whether living or dead, will shift, change, renew, and disappear in accordance with God’s thoughts. Such is the way in which God presides over all things”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God Is the Source of Man’s Life). Truly, all things and all events are in God’s hands. Whether living or dead, all things undergo change according to God’s thoughts. In this moment, I gained a true understanding of how God holds sovereignty over and orchestrates all things. What’s more, I gained the confidence I needed to rely upon God to face the coming interrogation. Pointing at the things in the bag, the police officer asked accusingly: “These show that you’re clearly no ordinary church member. You must be one of the senior leadership, someone important, as junior leaders don’t have pagers or cell phones. Am I right?” “I don’t understand what you’re saying,” I replied. “You’re pretending you don’t!” he roared, then ordered me to squat down and start talking. Seeing I wasn’t going to play ball, they surrounded me and began punching and kicking me—as though they wanted to kill me. With my face bloody and swollen, my whole body aching unbearably, I collapsed on the floor. I was incensed. I wanted to talk reason to them, to argue my case: What have I done wrong? Why did you beat me like that? But I had no way of talking sense with them, because the CCP government doesn’t talk sense. I was confused, but I didn’t want to give in to their beatings. Just as I was at a loss, I suddenly thought of how, since these evil officers of the CCP government were being so absurd, since they weren’t letting me speak any words of reason, I needn’t say anything to them. I was better off keeping silent—that way I’d be of no use to them. When I thought of this, I stopped paying any attention to what they were saying. Seeing that

this approach had no effect on me, the evil policemen flew into a rage and grew even more barbaric: They turned to torture to extract a confession. They handcuffed me to a metal chair screwed to the ground in such a position that I could neither squat nor stand. One of them placed my uncuffed hand on the chair and struck it with a shoe, only stopping when the back of my hand had gone black and blue, while another stomped on my feet with his leather shoes, rolling his shoes around on my toes to crush them, which is when I experienced an incredible, shooting pain that went straight to my heart. After that, six or seven policemen took turns at me. One of them concentrated on my joints, and pinched them so hard that a month later I still couldn't bend my arm. Another grabbed my hair and shook my head from side to side, then wrenched it back so I was looking up. "Look at the sky and see if there's a God!" he said viciously. They carried on until nightfall. Seeing that they weren't going to get anything out of me, and because it was Chinese New Year, they sent me straight to the detention house.

When I arrived at the detention house, the guards put me in a cell and then made a lot of rumors about me and incited the prisoners to torment me. The prisoners played tricks on me every day: When it was 8 or 9 degrees below zero, they soaked my shoes; they secretly poured unboiled water in my food; in the evening, when I was asleep, they drenched my cotton-padded jacket; they made me sleep next to the toilet, and they often pulled off my quilt in the night and pulled my hair to keep me from sleep; they snatched my steamed buns; they forced me to clean the toilet, and forced their leftover medicine into my mouth, they didn't let me relieve myself; and more. If I didn't do anything they said, they'd gang up and beat me—and often at such times the correctional officers or the roundsmen would hurry out of view or pretend they hadn't seen anything; sometimes they'd

even hide a little way off and watch. If the prisoners went a few days without tormenting me, the correctional officers would incite them to beat me. The guards' brutal torment filled me with hatred for them. If I hadn't witnessed this with my own eyes and personally experienced it, I would never believe that the CCP government, which is supposed to be full of benevolence and morality, could be so dark, fearful, and horrible—I would never have seen its true face, a face that is deceitful and duplicitous. All its talk of "serving the people, creating a civilized and harmonious society"—these are lies designed to deceive and hoodwink people, they are a means, a trick, of beautifying itself and gaining kudos it does not deserve. At that time, I thought of the words of God: **"Small wonder, then, that God incarnate remains completely hidden: In a dark society such as this, where the demons are merciless and inhumane, how could the king of devils, who kills people without batting an eye, tolerate the existence of a God who is lovely, kind, and also holy? How could it applaud and cheer the arrival of God? These lackeys! They repay kindness with hate, they have long since disdained God, they abuse God, they are savage in the extreme, they have not the slightest regard for God, they plunder and pillage, they have lost all conscience, they go against all conscience, and they tempt the innocent into senselessness. Forefathers of the ancient? Beloved leaders? They all oppose God! Their meddling has left all beneath heaven in a state of darkness and chaos! Religious freedom? The legitimate rights and interests of citizens? They are all tricks for covering up sin!"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Work and Entry (8)). To force me to deny and betray God, the CCP stopped at nothing in torturing and ravaging me—yet little did it know that the more it tortured me, the more clearly I saw its devilish face, and the more I

despised and rejected it from the depths of my heart. I was more resolute in following God.

Seeing that they weren't going to get me to say anything they wanted, they spared no expense—be it manpower, or material and financial resources—to go up hill and down dale asking for proof that I was a believer in God. Three months later, all their rushing about had come to nothing. In the end, they played their trump card: They found a master interrogator. It was said that everyone who was brought to him was subjected to his three forms of torture, and no one had ever not confessed. One day, four police officers came and said to me: “Today we’re taking you to a new home.” Next, they pushed me into a prisoner transport van, cuffed my hands behind my back, and put a hood over my head. I didn’t know how they planned to torture me, so I felt a little nervous. Just then, I thought of the Lord’s words, **“For whoever will save his life shall lose it: and whoever will lose his life for My sake shall find it”** (Matthew 16:25). The Lord’s words gave me faith and strength. If we want to believe in and follow God in the ghost town of China, we must have the courage to offer up our lives. I was prepared to die for God. To my surprise, after getting in the van, I inadvertently overheard a conversation between the evil police. It seemed they were taking me somewhere else to be interrogated. Ah! They weren’t taking me to be executed—and I’d been preparing to die a martyr for God! Just as I was thinking this, for some unknown reason one of the police tightened the strings of the hood over my head. Soon after, I started feeling uncomfortable—it felt like I was being suffocated. I started foaming at the mouth, then couldn’t stop vomiting. It felt like I was going to vomit my insides out. I felt dizzy, my head empty, and I couldn’t open my eyes. I had no strength anywhere in my body, as if I’d been paralyzed. It felt like there was something sticky in my mouth that I couldn’t get out. I’d always

been frail, and after being abused like this I sensed I was in trouble, and that I might stop breathing at any time. Amidst the pain, I prayed to God: “O God! I ask that You protect my heart. Whether I live or die, I will not betray You.” Sometime later, the van arrived at a hotel. They carried me to a sealed room. Soon after, the “interrogation expert” the police had spoken of arrived. He walked in front of me and grabbed me. After slapping me dozens of times on the face, he gave me several hard punches to the chest and back, then took off one of his leather shoes and hit me across the face with it. After being beaten by him like this, I lost the feeling that there was something I couldn’t get out of my mouth or stomach. I no longer felt so dazed and I could open my eyes. Feeling gradually came back to my limbs, and strength started to return to my body. Next, he roughly grabbed my shoulders and pushed me back against the wall, ordering me to look at him and answer his questions. Seeing I wasn’t paying him any attention enraged him, and he tried to get a reaction from me by vilifying, slander and blaspheming God. He used the most contemptible, despicable means to bait me, and said ominously, “I’m deliberately tormenting you with what is unbearable to your flesh and soul, to make you suffer pain that no normal person could suffer—you’re going to wish you were dead. In the end, you’ll beg me to let you go, and that’s when you’ll speak sense, and say that your fate isn’t in God’s hands—it’s in mine. If I want you to die, it’ll happen straight away. If I want you to live, you’ll live, and whatever hardship I want you to suffer, that’s what you’ll suffer. Your Almighty God can’t save you—you’ll only live if you beg us to save you.” Faced with these despicable, shameless, contemptible thugs, these wild animals, these evil demons, I really wanted to fight them. “All things in heaven and on earth are created by God and controlled by Him,” I thought. “My fate is also subject to God’s sovereignty and arrangements. God is the Arbiter of life

and death; do you think I'll die just because you want me to?" At that moment, my heart was filled with fury. All the despicable acts the policemen had perpetrated against me and all the blasphemous and God-resisting things they had said today clearly exposed their demonic substance as haters of the truth and resisters of God, and this would be the evidence needed to warrant God's condemnation, punishment and destruction.

My refusal to confess had cost the supposed expert a lot of face. He furiously twisted one of my arms behind my back and pulled the other behind my shoulder, then tightly cuffed my hands together. After less than half an hour, big drops of sweat were rolling down my face and into my eyes, preventing me from opening them. Seeing I still wasn't going to reply to his questions, he threw me to the ground, then lifted me up by the handcuffs behind my back. I instantly felt a tearing pain in my arms, as if they'd been broken. It hurt so much I could hardly breathe. Next, he hurled me against the wall and made me stand against it. Sweat was blurring my eyes. It hurt so much my whole body was covered with sweat—even my shoes were soaked. I'd always been frail, and at this moment I collapsed. It seemed I had lost the ability to breathe through my nose. I could only pant with my mouth open. I felt death once more drawing near—maybe this time I really would die. But at that moment, I thought of Luke, one of Jesus' disciples, and his experience of being hanged to death. In my heart, I spontaneously regained my strength, and kept saying the same thing over and over to remind myself: "Luke died by being hanged. I, too, must be Luke, I must be Luke, be Luke. I willingly obey God's orchestrations and arrangements, and I wish to be loyal to God unto death like Luke." Just as the pain became unbearable and I was on the verge of death, I suddenly heard one of the evil police say that they had arrested several believers in Almighty God. In my heart, I was shocked: Several more brothers and

sisters were to be tortured. They were bound to be especially hard on the brothers. My heart was filled with worry. I kept silently praying for them. Perhaps I was touched by the Holy Spirit; the more I prayed, the more inspired I was. I unconsciously forgot my pain. I knew full well that these were the wise arrangements of God; God was mindful of my weakness and was leading me through my most painful time. That night, I no longer cared how the evil police treated me, and paid not the slightest attention to their questions. Seeing what was happening, the evil police used their fists to savagely beat my face, then wound the hair at my temple around their fingers and wrenched it. My ears were swollen from being twisted, my face was unrecognizable, my bottom and my thighs had been left bruised and torn when they beat me with a thick piece of wood, and my toes, too, had been left black and blue after being smashed with a piece of wood. After I had been hung up by handcuffs for six hours, when the evil police opened the handcuffs, the flesh below my left thumb had been rubbed clean off—there was only a thin layer left covering the bone. The handcuffs had also left my wrists covered in yellow blisters, and there was no way of getting them back on again. At that moment, an important-looking female police officer walked in. She looked me up and down, then said to them: “You can’t beat this one anymore—she looks like she’s about to die.” The police locked me in one of the hotel rooms. Its curtains were pulled tightly shut twenty-four hours a day. Someone was assigned to guard the door, and none of the service personnel were allowed to enter, nor was anyone allowed to see the scenes of them torturing and savaging me within. They took turns at interrogating me without respite. For five days and nights, they didn’t let me sleep, they didn’t let me sit or squat, nor did they allow me to eat my fill of food. I was only allowed to stand leaning against the wall. One day, an official came to interrogate me. Seeing that I was ignoring him, he flew into

a rage and sent me flying under the table with a kick. Next, he pulled me out and punched me, causing blood to flow from the corner of my mouth. To cover up his savagery, he quickly closed the door to stop anyone coming in. Then he tore off a handful of tissues and wiped away my blood, washing the blood off my face with water and cleaning the blood off the floor. I deliberately left some of the blood on my white sweater. When I returned to the detention house, however, the evil police told the other prisoners that the blood on my clothing was from when I was being certified at the mental hospital and said that was where I'd been for the last several days. The wounds and blood on my body had been caused by the patients—they, the police, hadn't touched me. These cruel facts showed me the ruthlessness, insidious cunning, and inhumanity of the People's Police, and at the same time, I truly felt God's protection and care for me. Every time my pain was at its worst, God would enlighten and guide me, increasing my faith and strength, giving me the courage to stand witness for Him. When the evil police's savagery left me at death's door, God allowed me to hear news of other brothers' and sisters' arrest, using this to further move me to pray for them, so that I forgot my own pain and unwittingly overcame the constraints of death. With Satan acting as the evil, vicious foil, I saw that only God is the truth, the way, and the life, and that only God's disposition is the symbol of righteousness and goodness. Only God rules everything and arranges everything, and He used His great power and wisdom to lead my every step in defeating the siege of the demon legions, in overcoming the weakness of the flesh and constraints of death, thereby allowing me to tenaciously survive in this dark lair. As I thought about God's love and salvation, I felt greatly inspired, and I resolved to fight Satan to the very end. Even if I rotted in jail, I would stand firm in my testimony and satisfy God.

After trying everything they could, the evil police had gotten nothing from me. In the end, they said with conviction: “The CCP is made of steel, but those who believe in Almighty God are made of diamond—they’re one better than the CCP in every regard.” After hearing these words, in my heart I couldn’t help but cheer and praise God: “O God, I thank and praise You! With Your almightiness and wisdom, You have overcome Satan and defeated Your enemies. You are the highest authority and may glory be to You!” Only at this moment did I see that no matter how cruel the CCP government is, it is controlled and orchestrated by God’s hands. Just as God’s words say: **“All things in the skies and on the ground must come under His dominion. They cannot have any choice and must all submit to His orchestrations. This was decreed by God, and it is the authority of God”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Success or Failure Depends on the Path That Man Walks).

One day, the evil police came to interrogate me once again. This time they all seemed a little strange. They looked at me when they spoke, but it didn’t seem they were talking to me. They appeared to be discussing something. Like the previous times, this interrogation ended in failure. Later, the evil police took me back to my cell. On the way, I suddenly heard them saying that it looked like I would be released on the first of the next month. Hearing this, my heart almost burst with excitement: “This means I’ll be out in three days!” I thought. “I can finally leave this demonic hell!” Suppressing the delight in my heart, I expected and waited as every second passed. Three days felt more like three years. Finally, the first of the month arrived! That day, I kept staring at the door, waiting for someone to call out my name. The morning went by, and nothing happened. I put all my hopes in leaving in the afternoon—but when evening arrived, still nothing happened. When it was time for the evening meal, I didn’t feel like eating.

In my heart, I had a sense of loss; at that moment, it was like my heart had fallen from heaven into hell. “Why isn’t she eating?” the correctional officer asked the other prisoners. “She hasn’t eaten much since she came back from being interrogated that day,” one of the prisoners replied. “Feel her forehead; is she sick?” the correctional officer said. A prisoner came up and felt my forehead. She said it was very hot, that I was running a fever. I really was. The illness had come on very suddenly, and it was very severe. At that moment, I collapsed. Over the course of two hours, the fever got worse and worse. I cried! All of them, including the correctional officer, watched me crying. They were all nonplussed: Their view of me was as someone who was neither enticed by the carrot nor browbeaten by the stick, who had not shed a single tear each time she was faced with grievous torture, and who had been hung up by handcuffs for six hours without a groan. Yet today, without any torture, I cried. They didn’t know where my tears came from—they simply thought I must be very ill. In fact, only God and I knew the reason. It was all because of my rebelliousness and disobedience. These tears flowed because I felt despair when my expectations had come to nothing and my hopes had been dashed. They were tears of rebelliousness and grievance. At that moment, I no longer wanted to set my resolve to bear testimony to God. I didn’t even have the courage to be tested like this again. That evening, I wept tears of misery, because I’d had enough of life in prison and I despised these demons—and even more than that, I hated being in this terrible place. I didn’t want to spend another second there. The more I thought about it, the more dispirited I became, and the more I felt a great sense of grievance, piteousness, and loneliness. I felt I was like a lonesome boat upon the sea, one that could be engulfed by the water at any time; moreover, I felt those around me were so insidious and awful that they might vent their anger on me at any time. I

prayed to God over and over, and these words from Him occurred to me: **“For everyone who aspires to love God, there are no unobtainable truths and no justice for which they cannot stand firm. How should you live your life? How should you love God, and use this love to satisfy His desire? There is no greater matter in your life. Above all, you must have such aspirations and perseverance, and should not be like those who are spineless, those who are weaklings. You must learn how to experience a meaningful life and experience meaningful truths, and should not treat yourself perfunctorily in that way”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Experiences of Peter: His Knowledge of Chastisement and Judgment). God’s words gave me faith. I thought of how I’d solemnly sworn before God that no matter how much I might suffer, I would stand witness and shame Satan. But when I was going to face police torture for a long time, I lost my resolve and was hoping only for the day I could escape that wretched place. How was that any kind of submission? How was that any kind of testimony? In a prayer to God, I swore that even if it meant spending my entire life in prison, I would never succumb to Satan. I would stand witness and humiliate Satan. Then on December 6, 2005, I was released, putting an end to that hellish prison life.

After experiencing this arrest and persecution, although my flesh had endured some hardship, I had developed insight and discernment, and truly seen that the CCP government is the embodiment of Satan the devil, a band of murderers that would kill people without blinking an eye, but I had also come to understand God’s omnipotence and wisdom, as well as His righteousness and holiness; I had come to appreciate God’s good intentions in saving me, and His care and protection toward me, thereby allowing me, during Satan’s savagery, to overcome Satan one step at a time, and stand firm in my testimony. From this day onward, I wish to give my entire being

completely to God, and I will staunchly follow God, that I might be gained by Him as soon as can be.

87. Brutal Torture Strengthened My Faith

By Zhao Rui, China

In the spring of 2009, the Chinese Communist Party carried out a large-scale campaign of arrests targeting members of The Church of Almighty God. Leaders from churches all over the country were arrested and thrown into prison one after another. At around 9 p.m. on the 4th of April, I and a sister with whom I was collaborating in performing our duties had just left Sister Wang's house and walked to the road when three men in plain clothes suddenly leaped up behind us and dragged us forcefully by the arms, yelling, "Let's go! You're coming with us!" Before we even had time to react, we were thrown into the back of a black sedan that was parked by the side of the road. It was just like in the movies when gangsters come and abduct someone in broad daylight, except now it was happening to us in real life, and it was absolutely terrifying. I was completely overwhelmed and all I could do was call silently out to God over and over: "Dear God! Save me! O God, please save me...." Before I had recovered my composure, the sedan pulled into the courtyard of the Municipal Public Security Bureau. It was only then that I realized that we had fallen into the hands of the police. Soon after, Sister Wang was also brought in. The three of us were taken to an office on the second floor and an officer, without the slightest explanation, seized our bags and made us stand facing the wall. She then forced us to strip naked and performed a body search, forcibly seizing some materials about our work in the church, receipts for church money that was kept, our cell phones, over 5,000 RMB in cash, a bank card and a watch, among other personal belongings which we had on us and in our bags, in the process. While all this was happening, seven or eight male police officers kept coming in and out of the room and two of the officers

that were monitoring us even burst out laughing and pointed at me, saying, “This one’s a big wig in the church, looks like we caught ourselves a big one today.” Soon after, four plainclothes police officers put me in handcuffs, covered my eyes with a hat, and escorted me to a Public Security Bureau branch far outside the city.

When I entered the interrogation room and saw that high-up, iron-grated window and that ghastly, cold-looking tiger chair, the gruesome stories of brothers and sisters who had been tortured in the past came floating into my mind. Thinking of the unknown torture that the evil police officers would subject me to next, I became extremely frightened and my hands began to shake involuntarily. In this desperate situation, I thought of God’s words: **“You still carry fear in your heart. Is it not then the case that your heart is still filled with Satan’s ideas?” “What is an overcomer? The good soldiers of Christ must be brave and rely on Me to be spiritually strong; they must fight to become warriors and battle Satan to the death”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 12). The enlightenment of God’s words gradually calmed my panicked heart and allowed me to realize that my fear had its source in Satan. I thought to myself: “Satan wants to torture my flesh so that I capitulate to its tyranny. I can’t fall for its conniving plot. At all times, God will always be my staunch backup and my eternal support. This is a spiritual battle and it is imperative that I stand witness for God. I must stand at God’s side and I cannot give in to Satan.” Having realized this, I quietly prayed to God: “O Almighty God! It is with Your good intentions that I’ve fallen into the hands of these wicked policemen today. However, my stature is far too small and I’m panicked and frightened. I pray that You give me faith and courage, so that I may break free from the strictures of Satan’s influence, not submit to it, and resolutely stand witness for You!” After

finishing my prayer, my heart was full of courage, and I didn't feel quite as frightened by those malicious-looking evil policemen.

Just then, two officers shoved me into the tiger chair and locked my hands and feet. One of the officers, a tall, hulking brute, pointed at some words on the wall that read "Civilized Enforcement of the Law" and then slammed the table and yelled, "Do you know where you are? The Public Security Bureau is the branch of the Chinese government that specializes in violence! If you don't come clean, you'll get what's coming to you! Speak! What's your name? How old are you? Where are you from? What's your position in the church?" Seeing his aggressive behavior filled me with rage. I thought to myself: "They always claim to be the 'People's Police' and that their goal is to 'root out the wicked and let the law-abiding live in peace,' but in reality they're just a bunch of thugs, bandits and underworld hit-men. They are demons waging a targeted assault on justice and punishing good, upstanding citizens! These policemen turn a blind eye to those who break the law and commit crimes, allowing them to live beyond the arm of the law. Yet, despite the fact that all we do is believe in God, read God's word and walk the right path in life, we have become the prime target of this pack of savages' violence. The CCP government truly is a perverse inverter of justice." Though I hated those evil policemen with all my heart, I knew that my stature was too small and I would be unable to withstand their cruel torture, so I called out to God again and again, entreating Him to grant me strength. Just in that moment, God's words enlightened me: **"Faith is like a single log bridge: Those who cling abjectly to life will have difficulty in crossing it, but those who are ready to sacrifice themselves can pass over, sure of foot and worry-free"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 6). The consolation and encouragement of God's words helped to ground me, and I thought to

myself: “Today I should be ready to risk everything—if worst comes to worst and I die, then so be it. If this band of demons thinks they’re going to find out about the church’s money, work or our leaders from me, they can think again!” Later, no matter how they interrogated me or tried to extort information from me, I didn’t say a word.

Seeing that I was refusing to talk, the other officer became enraged and, after slamming the table, stormed over to me, kicked the tiger chair I was sitting in and then shoved my head while yelling, “Tell us what you know! Don’t think we don’t know anything. If we didn’t know anything, then how do you think we were able to capture the three of you so decisively?” That tall police officer roared, “Don’t test my patience! If we don’t give you a little taste of pain, you’ll think we’re just making empty threats. Stand up!” No sooner had he spoken than he dragged me from the tiger chair over beneath a window, which was very high up on the wall and had an iron grating. They used one pair of spiked handcuffs for each hand, with one end locked around my hands and the other attached to the iron grating so that I hung by my hands from the window and could only touch the ground with the balls of my feet. One of them turned on the air conditioner to decrease the temperature in the room and then viciously smacked me on the head with a rolled-up book. When he saw that I still remained silent, he shouted in a fit of rage: “Are you gonna talk or not? If you don’t talk, we’ll give you a ‘go on the swing’!” With that, he used a long military-grade packing belt to tie up my legs and then fastened the belt to the tiger chair. They then pulled the tiger chair away from the wall so that I was hanging in the air. As my body moved forward, the handcuffs slid down to the base of my wrists and the spikes inside the handcuffs dug into the backs of my hands. I was in excruciating pain, but I bit down hard on my lip to prevent myself from screaming out because I didn’t want to let

those wicked policemen have a laugh at my expense. One of them said with a sinister grin, “Looks like it’s not painful! Let me crank it up a little bit for you.” With that, he lifted up his leg and stepped down hard on my calves and then rocked my body from side to side. This caused the handcuffs to grip tighter and tighter around my wrists and the backs of my hands and it was finally so painful that I couldn’t help but scream out in agony, which sent them into a fit of laughter. Only then did he stop pressing down on my legs, leaving me suspended there in mid-air. After about twenty minutes, he suddenly kicked the tiger chair back toward me, making a horrible screeching noise and I screamed as my body dropped back into position, hanging from the wall with only the balls of my feet touching the ground. Simultaneously, the handcuffs slid back up onto my wrists. With the sudden loosening of my handcuffs, the blood rapidly circulated out of my hands and rushed back into my arms, causing a throbbing pain from the pressure of the returning blood. They cackled sinisterly at the sight of my suffering and then proceeded to interrogate me, asking, “How many people are there in your church? Where do you keep the money?” No matter how they questioned me, I refused to talk until they became so angry that they began to hurl profanities: “Damnit! You’re a tough nut to crack! We’ll see how long you hold out!” With that, they once again pulled the tiger chair away from the wall, suspending me again in mid-air. This time, the handcuffs caught tightly on the already open wounds on the backs of my hands, and my hands rapidly swelled and engorged with blood, feeling as if they were about to explode. The pain was even more intense than the first time. They painted vivid portrayals for each other of their “glorious past exploits” in torturing and punishing prisoners. This went on for all of fifteen minutes before they finally kicked the chair back over to the wall and I resumed my former position hanging straight down from the window with only the balls

of my feet touching the ground. In the process, a rending pain swept through me once again. Just then, a short, pudgy male officer walked in and asked, “Has she talked yet?” The two officers replied, saying, “This one’s a real Liu Hulan!” That fat, evil policeman walked right up to me and slapped me hard across the face, viciously saying, “Let’s see how tough you are! Let me loosen up those hands of yours.” I looked down at my left hand and saw that it was badly swollen and had turned purplish-black. Just then, he grabbed the fingers of my left hand and began shaking them back and forth and rubbing and pinching them until the numbness once again gave way to pain. Then he adjusted the handcuffs so that they were at their tightest setting and signaled to those two officers to pull me up into the air again. I was, once again, suspended in mid-air and left in that position for twenty minutes before being let down. They kept on pulling me up into the air and then letting me back down over and over, torturing me to the point where I wished I could die to escape the pain. Each time the handcuffs slid up and down my hands, it was more painful than the time before. In the end, the spiked cuffs dug deep into my wrists and broke through the skin on the backs of my hands, causing profuse bleeding. The circulation in my hands had been completely cut off and they had swollen up like balloons. My head was pounding due to a lack of oxygen and felt like it was about to explode. I really thought I was going to die.

Just as I thought I couldn’t take it anymore, a passage of God’s words came to my mind: **“On the road to Jerusalem, Jesus was in agony, as if a knife were being twisted in His heart, yet He had not the slightest intention of going back on His word; always there was a powerful force compelling Him onward to where He would be crucified”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. How to Serve in Harmony With God’s Will). God’s words gave me a sudden surge of strength and I thought of how the Lord Jesus had

suffered on the cross: He was whipped, mocked and humiliated by the Roman soldiers and was beaten bloody. And yet He was still made to carry that heavy cross, the same one that they eventually nailed Him to alive, until every last drop of blood in His body had been shed. What cruel torture! What unimaginable suffering! Yet the Lord Jesus endured it all in silence. Even though the pain was surely immense beyond words, the Lord Jesus willingly put Himself in Satan's hands for the redemption of all mankind. I thought to myself: "Today, God has incarnated for a second time and come to the atheistic country of China. Here, He has met with dangers vastly more perilous than what He faced in the Age of Grace. Ever since Almighty God appeared and began performing His work, the CCP government has used every means possible to slander, blaspheme, maniacally pursue and capture Christ, vainly hoping to tear down God's work. The suffering that God has gone through in His two incarnations is beyond what anyone could imagine, much less endure. Given that God has endured so much suffering for us, I should have more of a conscience; I must satisfy God and bring Him comfort, even if it means my death." In that moment, the travails of all the saints and prophets through the ages flashed through my mind: Daniel in the lion's den, Peter hung upside down on the cross, James beheaded.... Without a single exception, these saints and prophets all stood resounding witness to God on the brink of death, and I realized that I should aim to emulate their faith, devotion and submission to God. Thus, I quietly prayed to God: "Dear God! You are innocent of sin but were crucified for our salvation. You were then incarnated in China to perform Your work, risking Your life. Your love is so great that I could never repay You. It is my greatest honor to suffer alongside You today and I am willing to stand witness to comfort Your heart. Even if Satan takes my life from me, I will never utter a single word of complaint!" With my mind

focused on God's love, the pain in my body seemed to diminish significantly. In the latter half of that night, the wicked policemen continued to torture me in shifts. Only at around 9 a.m. the following morning did they finally untie my legs and leave me hanging from the window. Both of my arms were completely numb and without feeling and my entire body was swollen. At that time, the sister I had been fulfilling duties with had been brought into the adjacent interrogation room. All of a sudden, eight or nine officers filed into my interrogation room, and a short, stout police officer entered in a huff and asked the evil policemen who were handling me: "Has she spoken yet?" "Not yet," they replied. As soon as he heard their reply, he bounded over to me, smacked me twice across the face and yelled at me irately, "You're still not cooperating! We know your name, and we know you're an important leader in the church. Don't be under the mistaken impression that we know nothing! Where did you put the money?" Seeing me stay silent, he threatened me, saying, "If you don't fess up, it will be even worse for you when we find out ourselves. Given your position within the church, you'll be sentenced to twenty years in prison!" Later on, they held up my bank card and asked for the name on the card and the pin number. I thought to myself, "Let them see, who cares. My family didn't transfer much money into that account anyway. Maybe if they see, they won't keep pestering me about church funds." Having decided, I told them the name and pin number.

Later on, I asked to go to the bathroom and it was only then that they finally let me down. At that point, I had completely lost control of the use of my legs, so they carried me to the bathroom and stood guard outside. However, I had already lost all feeling in my hands and the commands from my brain were just not reaching them, so I just stood there leaning against the wall, utterly unable to undo my pants. When I still hadn't come out after

some time, one of the policemen kicked open the door and yelled at me with a lascivious grin, “You’re still not done?” Seeing that I couldn’t move my hands, he walked up to me and undid my pants and then refastened my pants when I was done. A group of male officers had gathered outside the bathroom making all kinds of snide comments and humiliating me with their filthy language. The injustice of these thugs and demons humiliating an innocent, twenty-something young girl like me suddenly overwhelmed me and I began to cry. It also occurred to me that, if my hands were really paralyzed and I was unable to take care of myself in the future, I would be better off dead. If I had been able to walk properly at that moment, I would have jumped out of the building and ended it right there. Just as I was at my weakest, a church hymn “I Wish to See the Day of God’s Glory” came to mind: “I’ll offer up my love and loyalty to God and complete my mission to glorify Him. I’m determined to stand firm in my testimony to God, and never give in to Satan. Oh, though our heads may break and our blood may flow, the backbones of God’s people can’t be bent. With God’s exhortations strapped to my heart, I determine to humiliate Satan the devil. Pain and hardships are predestined by God. I will be faithful and obedient to Him unto death. I will never again cause God to weep and never again cause Him to worry” (Follow the Lamb and Sing New Songs). This hymn invested me with faith and my spirit was strengthened. I thought to myself: “I can’t be fooled by Satan’s tricks and I shouldn’t end my life over something like this. They are humiliating and taunting me so that I’ll do something that would hurt and betray God. If I were to die, I’d just be falling right into their conniving plot. I can’t allow Satan’s conspiracy to succeed. Even if I really have been crippled, as long as I still have one breath left within me, I must keep on living to bear witness for God.”

When I returned to the interrogation room, I collapsed on the floor out of exhaustion. The policemen encircled me and yelled at me, commanding me to stand back up. That short, fat officer that had smacked me across the face bounded over to me, gave me a vicious kick and accused me of faking it. At that moment, my body began to tremble, and I became short of breath and started hyperventilating. My left leg and the left side of my chest began to convulse and contract toward each other. My whole body went cold and stiff and no matter how two officers pulled and pried, they were unable to straighten me out. In my mind, I knew that God was using this pain and affliction to open up a way out for me, otherwise they would have continued to cruelly torture me. Only after seeing the precarious state I was in did those evil officers finally stop beating me. They then locked me into the tiger chair and went next door to torture my church sister, leaving two officers behind to watch me. Hearing my sister cry out over and over in blood-curdling shrieks, I wanted so badly to charge over to those demons and fight them to the death, but as things were, I was collapsed in a heap and utterly exhausted, so all I could do was pray to God and beg God to grant my sister strength and safeguard her so that she could stand witness. At the same time, I rancorously cursed that evil, wicked party that had plunged its people into the depths of suffering and asked God to punish these beasts in human form. Later on, seeing me collapsed there, seemingly on my last breath, and not wanting to have to deal with someone dying on their watch, they finally sent me to the hospital. After I arrived at the hospital, my legs and chest began convulsing and contracting toward each other again and it took several people to pry my body back into a straightened position. Both of my hands had swollen up like balloons and were covered in clotted blood. My hands were all distended with pus and they were unable to start an IV because as soon as they inserted the needle,

the blood would come flowing out of the vein, perfuse the surrounding tissue and bleed from the site of injection. When the doctor saw what was happening, he said, “We’ve got to get these handcuffs off!” He also recommended to the police that I be sent to the municipal hospital for further testing, because he was worried that I had a heart condition. Those wicked police didn’t want to do anything to help me, but after that they didn’t handcuff me anymore. The next day, the officer that was interrogating me wrote up a statement full of blasphemy and slander about God to be used as my verbal deposition and demanded that I sign it. When I refused to sign the statement, he became exasperated, grabbed my hand and forced me to mark my fingerprint on the statement.

Toward evening on the 9th of April, the division director and two other male police officers escorted me to the detention house. When the doctor at the detention house saw that my entire body was swollen, and that I was unable to walk, had no feeling in my arms and seemed to be hanging on by a thread, they declined to admit me, afraid that I may die there. Afterward, the division director negotiated with the detention house governor for nearly an hour and promised that if anything were to happen to me, the detention house would not be held responsible, and only then did the governor finally agree to take me into custody.

More than ten days later, over a dozen evil police were transferred from other precincts and were temporarily stationed at the detention house to interrogate me in shifts all day and night. There are set limits on the amount of time a prisoner can be interrogated, but the police said that this was a big, important case of a very serious nature, so they just wouldn’t leave me alone. Because they were afraid that, if they questioned me for too long I might, given my frail state, have some kind of health emergency, they would conclude their interrogation at around 1 a.m. and send me back to my

jail cell, summoning me the following morning at daybreak. They interrogated me for about 18 hours a day, three days straight. However, no matter how they grilled me, I didn't say a word. When they saw that their hard tactics weren't working, they switched over to soft tactics. They began to show concern for my injuries and would buy me medicine and apply ointments to my wounds. Faced with this sudden display of "kindness," I let down my guard, thinking: "If I just tell them something inconsequential about the church, it'll probably be alright..." Instantly, God's words appeared in my mind: **"Do not take a reckless approach, but draw closer to Me more often when things befall you; be more careful and cautious in all respects to avoid offending My chastisement, and to avoid falling prey to Satan's cunning schemes"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 95). I suddenly realized that I had fallen for Satan's cunning plot. Weren't these the same people who'd been torturing me just a few days ago? They could change their demeanor, but their evil nature was unalterable—once a demon, always a demon. God's words awakened me to the fact that they were just wolves in sheep's clothing, and that they always harbored ulterior motives. Going forward, no matter how they tempted me or grilled me, I wouldn't say another word. Soon after, God revealed their true colors; an officer whom they called Captain Wu fiercely questioned me: "You're a leader in the church, and yet you don't know where the money is? If you don't tell us, we have our ways of finding out!" An old, gaunt police officer burst into a storm of abuse, yelling, "Damnit, we give you an inch and you take a mile! If you don't talk, we'll send you out and hang you up again. We'll see if you still want to be a Liu Hulan and withhold information from us then! I've got plenty of ways of dealing with you!" The more he spoke in this way, the more determined I was to stay silent. He finally became exasperated and walked

over and shoved me, saying, “With this kind of behavior, twenty years would be a light sentence!” With that, he stormed out of the room in frustration. Afterward, an officer from the Provincial Department of Public Security in charge of affairs of national security came to question me. He made many statements attacking and resisting God and continually bragged about how experienced and knowledgeable he was, which led the other officers to lavish praise on him. Observing his smug, self-satisfied ugliness, and hearing all of his truth-perverting, rumormongering lies and false-incriminations, I felt both hate and disgust for this officer. I couldn’t even bear to look at him and so I just stared straight ahead at the wall in front of me and refuted each of his arguments in my head. His diatribe lasted the entire morning and when he was finally done, he asked me what I thought. I said impatiently: “I’m uneducated, so I don’t have a clue what you’ve been rambling on about.” Enraged, he said to the other interrogators, “There’s no hope for her. I think she’s already been godized, she’s done for!” With that he slunk off dejectedly.

When the evil police dragged me into my jail cell in the detention house and I saw that Sister Wang was there in the same cell, the sight of this loved one sent warmth surging into my heart. I knew that this was God’s orchestration and arrangement and that God’s love was looking out for me, and I knew that God had done this because, at that time, I was practically crippled—my arms and hands were badly swollen and distended with pus, I had no feeling in my fingers, which were as thick as sausages and hard to the touch, I could barely move my legs and my entire body was weak and wracked with pain. During that time, my sister took care of me every day—she brushed my teeth for me, cleaned my face, bathed me, combed my hair and fed me.... One month later, my sister was released, and I was informed that I had been formally arrested. After my sister was released, thinking of

how I was still unable to take care of myself and having no idea how much longer I'd be locked up, I felt incredibly helpless and bleak. I couldn't help but call out to God: "O God, I feel like a cripple—how am I supposed to go on like this? I beg You to safeguard my heart, so that I may overcome this situation." Just as I was at my wit's end and feeling utterly lost, I thought of God's words: **"Have you considered that one day your God will put you in a most unfamiliar place? Can you imagine what would become of you one day when I might snatch everything from you? Would your energy on that day be as it is now? Would your faith reappear?"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. You Must Understand the Work—Do Not Follow in Confusion!). God's words were like a shining beacon illuminating my heart and allowing me to understand His will. I thought to myself: "The environment I am now faced with is the one with which I am least familiar. God wants me to experience His work within this kind of environment to perfect my faith. Though my sister has left me, God certainly has not! Thinking back over the path that I have walked, God has guided me each and every step of the way! If I rely on God, there is no difficulty that cannot be overcome." I saw that my faith was too small, so I prayed to God: "Dear God, I am willing to put myself entirely in Your hands and submit to Your orchestrations. No matter what situations I may face in the future, I will submit to You and not complain." After concluding my prayer, I felt a sense of serenity and calm. On the afternoon of the next day, the correctional officer brought in a new inmate. When she saw my situation, she began taking care of me without my even asking. In this, I saw God's wondrousness and faithfulness; God hadn't abandoned me—all things in heaven and on earth are in God's hands, including the thoughts of man. If it hadn't been for God's orchestrations and arrangements, why would this woman whom I had never met be so nice to me? After that, I witnessed

even more of God's love. When that woman was released from the detention house, God raised up one woman after another whom I had never met to take care of me, and they handed over my care from one to another as though they were passing on a relay baton. There were even some inmates who transferred money into my account after they were released. During this time, though my body did suffer somewhat, I was able to experience the sincerity of God's love for man firsthand. No matter what kind of situation man is cast into, God never abandons him, but serves as his constant aid. As long as man doesn't lose faith in God, he will certainly be able to witness God's deeds.

I was detained for one year and three months and then charged by the CCP government for "working through a xie jiao organization to obstruct the enforcement of the law" and was sentenced to three years and six months imprisonment. Following my conviction, I was transferred to the Provincial Women's Prison to serve out my sentence. In prison, we were subject to even more inhuman treatment. We were forced to do manual labor every day and our daily workload requirements were far in excess of what anyone could reasonably complete. If we were unable to finish our work, we would be subjected to corporal punishment. Virtually all of the money earned through our labor went into the jail guards' pockets. We were only given a few yuan each a month for a supposed living allowance. The official line that the prison used was that it was reeducating inmates through labor, but in reality, we were just their money-making machines, their unpaid servants. By all appearances, the prison's rules for reducing inmates' sentences seemed very humane—by meeting certain conditions, inmates could qualify for a suitable reduction of their sentence. But in truth, this was just a front and was just for appearance's sake. In all actuality, their so-called humane system was nothing more than empty words on paper: The

orders personally issued by the guards were the only real laws of the land. The prison strictly controlled annual sentence reduction totals to ensure sufficient labor capacity and to guarantee that the prison guards' income would not decrease. The sentence reduction was a technique employed by the prison to increase labor productivity. Of the several hundred inmates in the prison, only ten or so would get the sentence reduction and so people would work themselves to the bone, engaging in intrigues against each other to get it. However, most of the inmates that would end up getting the sentence reduction were those with police connections who didn't have to perform manual labor in the first place. Inmates had no choice but to keep their resentment about this to themselves. Some committed suicide in protest, but after the fact, the prison would just randomly make up stories to appease the families of the victims, and so their deaths were all in vain. In prison, the guards never treated us like human beings; if we wanted to talk with them, we had to squat on the ground and look up at them, and if anything wasn't to their liking, they'd berate and insult us with foul obscenities. When the three and a half long years of my sentence finally came to an end and I returned home, my family could not disguise the anguish they felt in seeing me looking like a human skeleton, so frail and depleted that I was barely recognizable, and many tears were shed. However, our hearts were full of gratitude for God. We thanked God that I was still alive and for having protected me so that I was able to emerge from that hell on earth in one piece.

Only after I returned home did I learn that while I was being detained, the wicked police had come twice and wantonly ransacked and searched through the house. My parents, who both believe in God, had fled our home and spent nearly two years on the run to evade capture by the government. When they finally returned home, the weeds in the courtyard had grown as

high as the house itself, parts of the roof had collapsed and the whole place was a dreadful mess. The police had also gone around our village spreading lies about us: They said that I had cheated someone out of their money to the tune of a million to upward of a hundred million RMB and that my parents had cheated someone out of several hundred thousand RMB to send my little brother to college. This gang of demons was a bunch of certified professional liars, the best in the game! In fact, because my parents had fled from home, my little brother had to use scholarship money and loans to pay his tuition and finish college. What's more, when he went away from home for work, he first had to save up for travel expenses a little at a time by selling the grain crops our family raised and picking hawthorn berries to sell. Yet those devils acted unconscionably, framing my family with false incriminations, the rumors of which still circulate to this day. Even now, I am still spurned by my village because of my reputation as a convicted political offender and scam-artist. I really hate the CCP—a gang of devils!

Thinking back over my years spent following God, I had only accepted God's words which expose the demonic nature and essence of the CCP government on a theoretical level, but had never truly understood them. Because, from a young age, I was instilled with the tenets of patriotic education, which conditioned and systematically deceived me into thinking a certain way, I even thought that God's words were an exaggeration—I just couldn't bring myself to abandon my idolization of our country, thinking that the Communist Party was always right, that the army protected our homeland, and that the police punished and eradicated evil elements from society and safeguarded the interests of the public. Only through experiencing persecution at the hands of those demons did I come to see the true face of the CCP government; it is supremely deceptive and hypocritical and has hoodwinked the people of China and the entire world with its lies

for years. It repeatedly professes to uphold freedom of belief and democratic legal rights, but in reality it wantonly persecutes religious belief. All it really upholds is its own tyranny, forced control and despotism. Though my flesh had been badly injured in the course of the CCP's cruel persecution, and I was pained and weak, God's words continually enlightened me and gave me faith and strength, so that I was able to see through Satan's schemes and stand witness for God. At the same time, I had a profound sense of God's love and kindness and my faith to follow God was strengthened. Just as Almighty God's word says: **"Now is the time: Man has long since gathered all his strength, he has devoted all his efforts and paid every price for this, to tear off the hideous face of this demon and allow people, who have been blinded, and who have endured every manner of suffering and hardship, to rise up from their pain and turn their backs on this evil old devil"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Work and Entry (8)). I have now returned to the church and I am fulfilling my duty by preaching the gospel. Thanks be to God!

88. The Hardship of Prison

By Xiao Fan, China

One day, back in May 2004, I was attending a gathering with some brothers and sisters when more than 20 police officers burst in. They said they were from the Municipal National Security Brigade and that they'd been monitoring my cellphone for the past four months. They said they were part of a province-wide crackdown and that many believers in Almighty God had been arrested. They took me to a Communist Party School in the city for interrogation. As soon as I got in, they ordered me to take off my shoes and squat down. After a little while, my legs went numb, but whenever I wanted to change position, the police would bark at me, saying that I wasn't allowed to move a muscle. They kept me squatting there for over two hours before they began to question me. "Who is your leader? Where is the church's money kept?" I said nothing. The National Security Brigade captain then came in with a pair of handcuffs and said fiercely, "Don't waste your time with her. Give her a taste of these!" Then he said to me, "Hear that in the next room?" I could hear a sister in the next room screaming and immediately felt nervous and scared, thinking, "These police are going to torture me like that. How am I going to bear it?" I then said a silent prayer to God, asking Him to give me strength and saying that I was willing to lean on Him and stand witness. Just then, the captain kicked me onto the ground, handcuffed my hands behind my back and then yanked them up and down. After dragging and pulling on me like this a few times, I was in such pain that sweat was pouring off me. They went on doing this for more than ten minutes before finally letting go. Seeing that this hadn't worked, they decided to try something different. They brought in some police from another area and some riot police from the city, who then began

to interrogate me one group at a time. There were four in each group and they took it in turns to watch me day and night, tormenting me by preventing me from falling asleep. When I just couldn't keep my eyes open any longer and slipped into sleep, the police would flick cold water in my face and pull my hair in an attempt to crush my resolve and make me sell out my brothers and sisters and betray God. Every day, my nerves were stretched to breaking point, afraid that if I lost concentration for one moment, I might reveal information on the church. I kept on praying to God in my heart, asking Him to guide me through those terrible days. The police deliberately humiliated me, as well. They wouldn't allow me to close the door when I had to use the toilet while male police officers were coming and going right outside. Some of them made a point of looking in, and many times they would just stand in the doorway watching me go to the toilet. I was interrogated and tortured in this way for 12 days. Because I hadn't slept in over 10 days and my nerves were frayed, I ended up severely constipated. Their tortures had caused me to lose weight from 58 to 52 kg. I'd lost 6 kg in just 12 days.

On the thirteenth day, the police took me to a detention house in the city. Less than a month later, they took me to a high-end hotel for monitoring. They brought my husband in and left him alone with me in a room so that he could encourage me to give up information on the church. I began to weaken at first, and I so wished I could get out of that hell hole with my husband as quickly as possible. But to leave, I had to betray God and sell out my brothers and sisters. God's words then came to mind: **"You must be awake and waiting at all times, and you must pray before Me more. You must recognize the various plots and cunning schemes of Satan, recognize the spirits, know people, and be able to discern all kinds of people, events, and things"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of

God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 17). God's words reminded me that the police had brought my husband in to soften me up so I would betray God. This was Satan's cunning scheme and I was in danger of falling into its trap. I thought how, when the police were interrogating me, they'd given me a list of brothers' and sisters' names and some photos and asked me to point out the ones I knew, but I'd refused. I also remembered how my husband was always so supportive of my faith, and I thought I could use this opportunity to get my husband to warn those brothers and sisters so that they could go to ground and avoid arrest. So I pretended to cry on my husband's shoulder and whispered my plan into his ear. He agreed to do it. To my surprise, a female officer immediately burst into the room and said to my husband, "We brought you in here to help us. What were you talking about? Get out of here!" The police had wanted my husband to encourage me to give up information on the church and betray God, but when this female officer saw that their scheme hadn't worked, she became exasperated and hustled my husband out. These police were so sinister and evil! Thanks be to God's guidance that kept me from falling for Satan's cunning scheme.

Afterward, the police took me back to the Communist Party School for interrogation. They shackled me to a tiger chair and a female officer burst into the room and began to beat me across the face with a plastic slipper. Everything went black and then I lay prone on the chair. She said I was faking it, so, cursing, she yanked on my hair and continued to beat me. My face swelled up like a purple eggplant and blood trickled from my eyes. A male officer came over and unlocked me from the tiger chair, then pulled me roughly off by my hair and tried to stuff me underneath the tiger chair. I couldn't quite fit under, so he kicked me and cursed me, saying I was no better than a dog. They shoved me underneath the chair and told me not to

move before then stuffing me back into the chair and shackling me again. Being so brutally beaten and humiliated like this left me feeling terribly upset and I began to weaken. I thought to myself: “They won’t let up torturing me. When will it ever end?” In such extreme pain, I started to wish for death, but I was shackled to the tiger chair, so there was no chance of that. So I kept praying to God in my heart and then I thought of all the saints throughout history who’d been persecuted for preaching the Lord’s gospel. Some had been torn apart by horses, some had been stoned to death, and some had been sawed to pieces. They’d all undergone tortures normal people couldn’t have endured and they’d all borne testimony to God with their lives. I, on the other hand, couldn’t take even this little bit of pain, and even wished for death as a means of escape. I was so weak and was not bearing testimony at all. Thinking these things, I was overcome by remorse and anguish, so I hurried before God to pray and repent. Just then, I noticed a little bird sitting outside a nearby window. Its feathers were grey and I remember a gentle rain falling that day. It kept chirping and to me it sounded like the bird was saying, “Stand witness, stand witness....” The bird’s chirping got faster and faster, until it sounded almost hoarse. I realized that God was using this bird to serve as a reminder to me, and I was deeply moved. I wept as I prayed to God, saying, “Dear God, I don’t want to be a craven or a coward. I don’t want to die in such a weak and frightened way. Please give me faith and strength. I want to stand witness and shame Satan.” Just then, God’s words came to mind: **“Perhaps you all remember these words: ‘For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.’ You have all heard these words before, yet none of you understood their true meaning. Today, you are profoundly aware of their true significance. These words shall be fulfilled by God during the**

last days, and they shall be fulfilled in those who have been brutally persecuted by the great red dragon in the land where it lies coiled. The great red dragon persecutes God and is the enemy of God, and so, in this land, those who believe in God are thus subjected to humiliation and oppression, and these words are fulfilled in you, this group of people, as a result” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Is the Work of God As Simple As Man Imagines?). **“During these last days you must bear testimony to God. No matter how great your suffering, you should walk until the very end, and even at your last breath, still you must be faithful to God and at the mercy of God; only this is truly loving God, and only this is the strong and resounding testimony”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Only by Experiencing Painful Trials Can You Know the Loveliness of God). God’s words comforted and encouraged me. They showed me that it was inevitable to be persecuted and harmed by the Chinese Communist Party in the course of believing in God and doing my duty as the CCP is the devil Satan, the enemy of God. But the wisdom of God is exercised based on the cunning schemes of Satan and God uses the persecution and cruel tortures Satan metes out to perfect our faith and obedience, and in doing so, He makes a group of overcomers. I was suffering for the sake of gaining the truth, and this suffering was both meaningful and worthwhile. Just then, I thought of how God Himself became flesh to save us and endured rejection and slander, and was hunted and persecuted by the CCP, unable to find shelter. God suffered such great humiliation and pain, so, as a corrupt human being, what did my little bit of suffering amount to? It was an honor to be able to suffer alongside Christ. I couldn’t face death fearfully; no matter how Satan tortured me, I decided I would stand witness to satisfy God to my last breath! Later, the National Security Brigade chief said with a sinister smile, “You seem to be holding out pretty well. We didn’t plan on

treating you this way. As long as you tell us everything and cooperate, I guarantee you'll be allowed home soon so you can be reunited with your family." They bought some chicken drumsticks and bread for me to eat, but I knew that this was just another ploy to lure me into betraying God. I looked at them and said in no uncertain terms, "I don't appreciate your gesture, so don't bother. I'm just meat on the chopping board for you to chop up as you see fit. I know I'm not getting out of here alive and I've accepted that fact, so you just do what you want. I've already told you I don't know the answers to your questions!" He then said with a cold smile, "Don't be so serious. Lighten up a bit. Just tell us what we want to know and you can go home." He then turned and slunk away. The police kept me sitting on the tiger chair after that. Two weeks later, they took me to the detention house. When the staff there saw me with such severe injuries, they refused to take me. The National Security Brigade police forced me to say that I'd hurt myself by falling over, so the detention house police had no choice but to accept me.

I was at the detention house for a month before the police brought me back to the Communist Party School for more interrogation. They kept me sitting on the tiger chair 24 hours a day, bolt upright and with my legs bent at 90 degrees. This lasted for a month. My neck became unbearably painful and my legs swelled up terribly. The police were always teasing, insulting, and beating me, and inside I was furious. In particular, I heard them talking about how they'd arrested so many believers in Almighty God, saying that whether the person they'd arrested was a man or woman, old or young, they'd torture them first to frighten them, and then they'd all play ball in the end. They said this was a means of deterrence. Hearing these monsters brag so excitedly about how they were hurting my brothers and sisters and seeing them laugh their self-satisfied, brutish laughs, my teeth ground

together in utter hatred. The CCP is truly a gang of demons that hurt people for fun. I prayed silently, cursing these monsters. Later on, the police saw that they weren't getting the information they wanted out of me, so they transferred me to a detention center, to a criminal detention house, and then to somewhere to brainwash me. Finally, I was taken back to the city detention house where I was locked up for a year and three months. The police did all this to crush my spirit and to make me betray God but they didn't succeed. Later, they charged me with "using feudal superstitions to interfere with the implementation of the law" and sentenced me to four years.

In prison, I once again knew how it felt to be in a living hell. I was set to making clothes on a production line where everyone had their own task to perform. Anyone who couldn't keep up with the process or couldn't finish their task was made to stand for 30 minutes to an hour after they finished work at 11 p.m. During that period, besides meals, I spent all my time in the work room. I couldn't spare time to drink when I was thirsty and I even had to run to the toilet and back. I ended up severely constipated. As I was spending all day every day sitting and working and because there was always so much work to do, plus the torture I had suffered at the hands of the police, being made to sit on that tiger chair for over two months, I ended up with severe neck pain again and often suffered from headaches and nausea. One time, I slipped and fell in the shower and hit my head hard on the floor. My back hit the steps and I became dazed and unable to move at all. I felt like I'd broken my back, and it hurt so much. Even the other inmates said I was surely done for, or that I'd now be crippled. They all yelled for help and rang the alarm bell, but no one came. In the end, some of the prisoners carried me to my bed. I felt like my body was broken and I couldn't stop crying from the pain. That night, it hurt so much I couldn't

sleep at all. A guard finally came to my cell at 8 a.m. the next morning. Impatiently, she demanded to know how badly I was hurt. I said, “I think my back is broken. I can’t move at all and my head really hurts.” But she just scoffed and said, “No big problem. You need to get yourself upstairs to work, you’ve got a lot to do. If you can’t move, you’ll have to find someone to carry you up. If no one helps, you’ll just have to crawl there by yourself!” She then turned and walked away. So I had to endure that terrible pain and ask some of the other prisoners to help me slowly off the bed. It took 30 or 40 minutes just to get me into a sitting position and then I made my way slowly over to the stairwell, and then up the stairs. It was a real struggle to get to my workstation, and I was trying to sit down, but after dozens of tries, I just couldn’t do it. In the end, I had to hold onto my machine and, gritting my teeth against the pain, use all my effort to sit myself down. I felt something break in my back and the pain was excruciating. It was really hard to hold up until the doctor came on duty, but all she did was rub some iodine on me and give me three notoginseng tablets. She told me to swallow them and then get back to work. And so, the pain I felt in my body and in my heart made me feel like I couldn’t go on any longer. I hated these police so much for treating me so inhumanely. In their eyes, prisoners were no better than dogs—we were just machines to make money for them. I thought of how I’d only been in prison for less than a year, whereas my sentence was four years. How on earth was I going to last such a long time? I really didn’t know whether I would survive it. I felt so alone and desolate thinking this. Without realizing it, I began to hum my favorite hymn of God’s words: **“When you face suffering, you must be able to lay aside concern for the flesh and to not make complaints against God. When God hides Himself from you, you must be able to have the faith to follow Him, to maintain your previous love without**

allowing it to falter or dissipate. No matter what God does, you must submit to His design and be prepared to curse your own flesh rather than make complaints against Him. When you are faced with trials, you must satisfy God, though you may weep bitterly or feel reluctant to part with some beloved object. Only this is true love and faith. No matter what your actual stature is, you must first possess both the will to suffer hardship and true faith, and you must also have the will to forsake the flesh. You should be willing to endure personal hardships and suffer losses to your personal interests in order to satisfy God's will. You must also be capable of feeling regret about yourself in your heart: In the past, you were unable to satisfy God, and now, you can regret yourself. You must not be lacking in any of these regards—it is through these things that God will perfect you. If you cannot meet these criteria, then you cannot be perfected” (Follow the Lamb and Sing New Songs, How to Be Perfected). I quietly sang this hymn, and the more I sang, the more moved I felt. I began to feel some strength inside and felt that, although I might now be suffering in this devils' lair, in my weakened state God's words were still guiding me, giving me faith and strength. God had never left me and with God's words, I wouldn't be alone. I felt so comforted by this thought and regretted my lack of determination to endure suffering. Faced with these hardships and trials, I'd fallen into negativity and wounded God's heart. I thought about what I'd been through since my arrest. I'd been harmed and tortured by the police for a long time, and were it not for the guidance of God's words and God watching over me, I would have died several times over by now. Now suffering this inhuman torment once again, I had faith that as long as I relied on God, then I would get through this, too. God was using this situation to perfect my faith. I knew I couldn't cause Him any more hurt; I had to rely on Him and toughen up, keep on living,

and bear witness to Him. Thinking these things, the distress I'd felt began to ebb away. It was God's words that guided me through the harm and torture inflicted on me by Satan during that time. Eventually, my sentence came to an end and I had survived long enough to walk out of that hell on earth.

When I got back home, I heard that the police had been busy spreading rumors saying I was a scam artist. My husband had had to find work elsewhere to avoid all the gossip and finger-pointing from the neighbors and he said he wanted a divorce. His mom had been so ashamed by my being sent to prison that she could barely look at me. My daughter had also been mocked relentlessly by both teachers and classmates so that not even one child in the village was willing to play with her anymore. I couldn't hold back the tears when I saw what had happened. We'd been such a happy family, now reduced to this because of the CCP's persecution. I hate the CCP down to my very bones! A passage of God's words came to my mind. Almighty God says, **"Forefathers of the ancient? Beloved leaders? They all oppose God! Their meddling has left all beneath heaven in a state of darkness and chaos! Religious freedom? The legitimate rights and interests of citizens? They are all tricks for covering up sin! ... Why put up such an impenetrable obstacle to the work of God? Why employ various tricks to deceive God's folk? Where is the true freedom and the legitimate rights and interests? Where is the fairness? Where is the comfort? Where is the warmth? Why use deceitful schemes to trick God's people? Why use force to suppress the coming of God? Why not allow God to freely roam upon the earth that He created? Why hound God until He has nowhere to rest His head? Where is the warmth among men? Where is the welcome among people? Why cause such desperate yearning in God? Why make God call out again and again? Why force God to worry for His beloved Son? In this dark society, why**

do its sorry guard dogs not allow God to freely come and go among the world which He created?" (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Work and Entry (8)). As I contemplated God's words, I thoroughly understood the ugliness of the CCP. It pretends to be righteous on the outside, spouting off about "freedom of religious belief," "keeping law and order for the people" and "caring for the people." It says all the right things about virtue and morality but in secret it uses any means at its disposal to arrest and persecute believers and spread rumors, resulting in countless Christians being thrown into prison, unable to return home, and having their families torn apart. I never saw the CCP for what it really is before, and I used to idolize it. But after I'd suffered its persecution, I finally saw that the CCP is the chief demon that harms the people. In essence, it is the enemy of God and of the truth, and it is the vilest, most reactionary bunch of devils.

After I got out of prison, the police never let up in their surveillance of me. The police in our local station were always asking whether I still believed in God and when I read God's words at home, I had to keep the front door tightly locked. I had to keep my book of God's words hidden in the most secret place and I had to be so careful and cautious when going to a gathering or preaching the gospel. One day in March 2013, a leader and two deacons from a church I was responsible for were arrested and I had to quickly arrange for some church stuff to be moved and notify some brothers and sisters to be on their guard. Just as I was sorting all this out, I heard a sister say, "The leader who got arrested had a list of brothers and sisters on her so the police have the list now." She said the police pulled up all surveillance videos, looking for strangers, and that they were preparing to go door-to-door looking for believers. They also made this threat: "Better to wrongly arrest a thousand than to let even one slip through the net!" I felt so nervous and afraid when I heard this. Because I'd been arrested for my faith

before, they had a file on me. If the police used face-recognition surveillance, then I was sure to be arrested. If I was arrested again, then there was no way I'd survive—they'd make sure of that. Thinking this, I realized I had to get away as soon as I could. When I got to another church, however, I couldn't get my mind to settle and had an attack of conscience. There was a lot of work in that church that urgently needed arranging, but I'd dropped my commission to safeguard my own life. If I left now, I wouldn't be protecting the interests of God's house! Where was my conscience and humanity? Wasn't I acting like a craven and a coward? I had no true faith in God—where was my testimony? As I thought these things, I hurried before God to pray, asking Him to grant me faith and strength and to protect me so that I could stand witness.

I then read a passage of Almighty God's words: **“When people are ready to sacrifice their lives, everything becomes trifling, and no one can get the better of them. What could be more important than life? Thus, Satan becomes incapable of doing any more in people, there is nothing it can do with man. Although, in the definition of the ‘flesh’ it is said that the flesh is corrupted by Satan, if people truly give themselves over, and are not driven by Satan, then no one can get the better of them”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Interpretations of the Mysteries of “God's Words to the Entire Universe”, Chapter 36). Pondering God's words, I understood that this situation was God's test, and that a war was raging in the spiritual world. I knew I had to stand with God and offer up my life to shame Satan and bear testimony to God; there was no way I could turn tail and run at such a crucial moment! I had to protect the work of God's house—that was the very thing someone with conscience and humanity should do. I was suffering persecution for the sake of righteousness, and even if I died, it would still be worth it. If I lived ignobly and surrendered to Satan,

then although my body would survive, I'd be like one of the walking dead. I felt liberated at this thought, so I hurried back to that church and organized the brothers and sisters to move all the books of God's words and told them all to lay low. All church work was arranged pretty quickly and I thanked God for His guidance!

Having believed in Almighty God for over 20 years and constantly suffering the persecution and oppression of the CCP, though I may have suffered some pain, under the guidance of God's words, I've come to understand some truths and have learned to discern between right and wrong, between righteousness and evil. I also learned to rely on God through such extraordinary circumstances. I truly feel the authority in God's words and my faith in God has grown. This is all by the grace of God. Thanks be to Almighty God!

89. A Battle Against Brainwashing

By Zhao Liang, China

I was arrested by the Chinese Communist Party police for my faith when I was 19. They put me through 60 days of torture and brainwashing to get me to deny God and sell out my brothers and sisters. That experience was really seared into my heart. I'll never forget it.

On my way to a gathering that morning, I noticed three cars parked nearby when I was nearly there. I felt a little uneasy. There usually weren't that many cars there. I told the brothers and sisters about it the moment I arrived and we realized our gathering was no longer safe. We started discussing changing locations. Pretty soon, four strangers came into the courtyard, saying they were with the National Security Brigade and were inspecting the house for hidden explosives. They forcefully held us down on the sofa and searched us and, finding nothing, they put me and another brother in one of their cars. They took us to the police station, where the police took us into the basement and locked us up separately. This arrest out of the blue just felt like it was in a dream and I had no idea how the police would treat me. I was kind of afraid and prayed to God nonstop, asking Him to give me faith. I thought of several lines from a hymn of God's words we'd sung a lot, "The Transcendence and Greatness of the Almighty." **"Everything of this world swiftly changes with the Almighty's thoughts and beneath His eyes. Things mankind has never heard of suddenly arrive, whereas things that mankind has long possessed unknowingly slip away. No one can fathom the Almighty's whereabouts, much less can anyone sense the transcendence and greatness of the Almighty's life force"** (Follow the Lamb and Sing New Songs). I said this prayer to God: "Almighty God, I thank and praise You! You rule

over everything in the universe and my fate rests in Your hands. You allowed the police to arrest me today. No matter how they torture me or how much I suffer, I want to stand witness, to never betray You and become a Judas.”

When 4:00 p.m. rolled around, the police took me out to a remote compound with a row of four-story buildings in the courtyard, that looked like a hotel. Lots of brothers and sisters had said that the police send detainees to hotels for secret interrogation and torture. I couldn’t help but wonder if they were about to torture me, too. It was a pretty desolate place. They could kill me and no one would be the wiser. My fear grew as I thought about it and I silently called out to God over and over. They took me into a room on the fourth floor, and the head of the Criminal Police Brigade said, feigning niceness, “What’s your name? Where do you live?” I asked him, “Why did you arrest me? Why have you brought me here?” He said, “This is a legal education course specially to educate and convert believers. We got you because we know all about you. Otherwise, we’d take someone else. The Church of Almighty God is a major national target, it’s to be wiped out. Believers in Almighty God are bound to be arrested.” “Isn’t freedom of belief in the constitution?” I asked. Smirking, he said, “Freedom of belief? That has its limits. In your faith, you have to listen to the Party and follow its rules to get our support. By believing in Almighty God, you’re pitting yourself against the Party. How could we not arrest you?” I shot back, “We just read Almighty God’s words and share the gospel to bear witness to God. We’re never engaged in politics at all. How could you claim that we’re pitting ourselves against the Party? Almighty God says, **‘God does not partake in the politics of man, yet the fate of a country or nation is controlled by God. God controls this world and the entire universe. The fate of man and the plan of God are intimately**

connected, and no man, country or nation is exempt from the sovereignty of God. If man wishes to know his fate, then he must come before God. God shall cause those who follow and worship Him to prosper and shall bring decline and extinction upon those who resist and reject Him' (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Appendix 2: God Presides Over the Fate of All Mankind). God's words are very clear. He rules the universe and has the fate of all nations and peoples in His hands, but God doesn't interfere in politics. God incarnate has come to earth in the last days mainly to express the truth and do judgment work so people can understand the truth, cast off their corrupt satanic dispositions, and be saved." The officer cut me off impatiently before I could finish, and said all sorts of things blaspheming The Church of Almighty God. He advised me to give up my faith. No matter what he said, I stayed calm before God, asking Him to protect me from Satan's tricks.

Around midday on the third day, they called me back to the meeting room. An officer introduced himself, saying he was the National Security Brigade captain and also worked in education and conversion. He asked my name, residence, and the church's information. I refused to talk, so he had me extend my left hand and put it on the table, palm up, then flicked ashes into my hand as he smoked, saying, "You should know that with today's technology, we'll find out whether you talk or not. Are you a moron? I was giving you a chance. The tip of my cigarette is about 800 degrees Fahrenheit. Want to see what that feels like?" He took two hard drags on it, then burned the palm of my hand with its glowing red tip. When I yanked it back in pain, another officer held my arm down forcefully. My palm was burning with sharp pains as he applied his cigarette tip over and over. Sweat was rolling down my forehead. Feeling a little weak, I said my own name.

They stopped torturing me at that point, but made me watch videos and read hearsay condemning and blaspheming The Church of Almighty God.

At midday on the fifth day, they had me watch news broadcasts about the Shandong Zhaoyuan case and then asked me what I thought. I said, “They’re not with The Church of Almighty God. No one with my Church would do something like that. We have principles in sharing the gospel. We only share it with kind-hearted people who believe there is a God, not with the evil. Awful people like Zhang Lidong don’t remotely meet our standards for sharing the gospel. God doesn’t recognize them as believers and the Church would never acknowledge them.” Seeing my faith hadn’t been shaken, he said, “We’ve arrested all your leaders, and we’ll find out everything from questioning them. We don’t need to waste our time with you. We wanted to save you, seeing how young you are.” I thought, “It’s all lies. They’re just trying to get me to betray God. No matter what they say, I’ll never sell out brothers and sisters. I’ll never betray God!” After seven that evening, a psychologist with the brainwashing class had me write reflections on the course. What I wrote was, “The Zhaoyuan incident wasn’t done by a believer in Almighty God. It was done by an evil demon. He will be punished by God for what he did.”

A little after nine, the National Security Brigade captain came in and was really unhappy with what I’d written. He came and lifted me from my stool with one hand, smacked me repeatedly with the other, and then kicked me to the floor. Then he dragged me up to the bed and started punching me. After a few punches, he picked up a wooden hanger, beating me all over with it and demanding information on the church. I kept quiet. Incensed by this, he ordered me to take all my clothing off. Seeing him looking so crazed frightened me. I silently prayed to God nonstop, asking Him to give me faith and strength. He yanked on me, forced me to disrobe and hit me a

few more times with the hanger, then had two instructors hold me down on the bed. I'd thought that the instructors were hired by the cops, but had a conscience and wouldn't go along with the police in torturing a teenager. I thought wrong. They pressed me down tightly, completely immobilizing me. That National Security Brigade captain burned my nipples with his cigarette like a lunatic, leaving them scorched in no time and filling the air with the smell of burnt flesh. I was drenched in sweat from the pain and my legs kept kicking. Then he started on my genitals while screaming, "Will you talk or what?" Crying out loudly in pain, I was overcome with just one thought: "I cannot betray God." I was praying to God in my heart nonstop, begging Him to give me strength and faith so I could make it through that evil officer's torture.

I stayed silent, so the captain said viciously, "You won't be good unless I'm harder on you." He turned around, picked up a thermos, and dumped a cup of boiled water on me. I screamed in pain. He said coldly, "Will you talk?" I said fearlessly, "I don't know anything!" Infuriated after hearing that, he dumped two more cups of boiled water on my stomach. He saw I wasn't in as much pain as before, so he touched my stomach and yelled that the water wasn't hot. He then turned around and ordered to have a pot of water boiled. Then he got an evil grin on his face and said, "In a moment you'll get a taste of boiling hot water being poured on your body." I couldn't help but feel scared when I heard this and thought about how the hot water before had been cooler than that. If I had truly boiling water poured on me, would I be able to take it? Nervous and afraid, I silently prayed to God: "Almighty God, please give me faith and strength. I want to stand witness and not betray You or sell out brothers and sisters." I thought of God's words after my prayer: **"Faith is like a single log bridge: Those who cling abjectly to life will have difficulty in crossing it, but those**

who are ready to sacrifice themselves can pass over, sure of foot and worry-free” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 6). I thought over God’s words and realized that having timid and fearful thoughts was falling prey to Satan’s tricks, and I saw I didn’t have true faith in God. I had to put my life on the line and lean on God in every moment to stand witness. This understanding gave me the faith I needed to face the torture awaiting me.

Just then, he lit a cigarette and took two long drags, stood in front of me and said, smiling wickedly, “Sit tight, the water’s almost ready!” As he spoke, he placed the tip of his cigarette on my chest right where I’d been scalded by the water. I kept trying to pull back from the pain. The water was boiling seven or eight minutes later. Seeing the water bubbling and emitting steam from the kettle, my scalp started tingling, I was shuddering, and all my hair was standing on end. He carried the kettle over, opened the lid, and came close to me. I could feel the steam on my body. Then he pressed the hot water kettle right against my stomach. I felt a searing pain and instinctively cried out. He took that opportunity to ask me again if I’d talk, and seeing me stay quiet, he grabbed a cup, filled it with water, and splashed it on my chest. It hurt so much that I leaped up, and he kept splashing me with hot water until the kettle was empty. I couldn’t stop shaking, and the entire front of my body was covered in blisters from the burns. The biggest ones were the size of an egg. The instructors couldn’t bear the sight and wanted to leave, so he went straight to the door and locked them in, then yelled, “Don’t go, stay here and watch. See how I show him what’s what.” Then he told them to go boil more water. I couldn’t hold back my fear when I heard that. I thought, “There is more, and if the first pot of water has left me in that state, what will more burns do to me? Will I be able to stay strong?” I called out to God nonstop, asking Him for

faith and strength. Then these words from God came to mind: **“Those in power may seem vicious from the outside, but do not be afraid, for this is because you have little faith. As long as your faith grows, nothing will be too difficult”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 75). The police torturing me was happening with God’s permission. God wanted to perfect my faith. No matter how evil, how savage they were, it was still in God’s hands. As long as I prayed and leaned on God, I knew God would guide me to triumph over Satan’s torture. I didn’t feel as afraid anymore and I had the faith to keep facing the torment.

Before long, the second pot had boiled. He brought it over, filled a cup with hot water, brought it over in front of me, and started splashing my genitals with it. I yelled out from the pain and couldn’t help but pull back. He took a few steps forward and kept questioning me, but I still refused to answer. He held a cup full of hot water underneath my genitals and asked, “Will you talk, or not?” I didn’t say a word. He yanked the cup straight up so that my genitals were entirely submerged in it. I was screaming in pain and instinctively pulled back, trembling. I really couldn’t take it anymore and I was praying nonstop, asking God for strength, to keep me from betraying Him. Then I thought of something the Lord Jesus said: **“For whoever will save his life shall lose it: and whoever will lose his life for My sake shall find it”** (Matthew 16:25). I knew that if I sold out the others and betrayed God to avoid physical suffering, that would offend God’s disposition. I’d go to hell and suffer for eternity. Understanding that, I resolved that no matter how much I suffered, I’d clench my teeth and never betray God. That evil officer poured another two cups of hot water on my genitals and kept questioning me. I looked down and saw that the outer layer of skin on my genitals had been burned off and the two instructors

couldn't bear to look at me. Helpless, they said, "Son, just talk. What good is it to suffer this way?" I didn't make a sound. The officer's assistant walked in right then. He was stunned for a moment when he saw me. He turned his head to the side, walked over to me, and said, "Just confess. We've gotten lots of you people. Even if you don't, someone else will. We're giving you a chance." I lowered my head and said nothing. Seeing me silent, the officer shouted, infuriated, "You guys back off. I'll see how long he can take it!" He then poured a cup of hot water and splashed it on my chest again, leaving me crying out and leaping up in agony. As he threw hot water on me, those blisters on my body popped and the skin stuck to me. New blisters formed before long; the pain was unbearable. I started to weaken a bit. I thought, "They've arrested lots of brothers and sisters. Even if I don't talk, someone else probably will. Why should I have to go through all this? I can just tell them a little bit so I don't have to suffer this way." I saw the officer had no intention of stopping and I had no idea if I'd be able to withstand what he had in store for me. But talking would make me a Judas. Just then I thought of these words from God: **"Toward those who showed Me not the slightest loyalty during times of tribulation, I shall be merciful no more, for My mercy only extends so far. I have no liking, furthermore, for anyone who has once betrayed Me, much less do I like to associate with those who sell out the interests of their friends. This is My disposition, regardless of who the person may be"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Prepare Sufficient Good Deeds for Your Destination). God wanted nothing to do with those who sold out the interests of their friends. If I talked, wouldn't that mean I'd betrayed God? I couldn't say anything. Absolutely not. I said this silent prayer: "God, thank You for enlightening me and keeping me from selling out brothers and sisters. No matter how much I may suffer, I'll never be a Judas."

Seeing me silent, the National Security Brigade captain lit a cigarette and said with a sinister smile, "Let's take it slow. We've got plenty of time," all the while blowing smoke into my nose. After that, he picked up the cup and poured hot water over my head. I instinctively moved away, sending water down by my right ear and onto my back. I cried out in pain and my back felt like it was on fire. He dumped several more cups down from my stomach and splashed water onto my thighs. Blisters appeared immediately where he'd dumped the water. He had the instructors go boil another one when the kettle was empty. The third one was boiling after a few minutes. As I saw the steam rising from the kettle, I just couldn't stop shaking. Grinning, he picked up the kettle and said, "Perfect!" Then he held it against my body again and said menacingly, "So will you talk, or not?" I didn't answer, so he poured cup after cup of boiling water on me. I was overwhelmed with the pain. I saw he had no intention of stopping and I didn't know how much longer I could last. I was in so much pain; I just wanted to die so I wouldn't have to keep suffering that way and I wouldn't sell anyone out because of my fleshly weakness. I looked around the room for a hard object I could do myself in with, but there was just a table and the walls were made of wood. I didn't think I'd die by hitting my head just once, and then I'd have to endure more torture. I figured I could just say yes for now, then they'd take me to identify the others' homes. Outside, I could jump out of the car to my death. Just as I was thinking this, the officer kept asking me if I'd talk and I nodded. I thought they'd take me to identify homes right away, but surprisingly, he asked me to tell him about the church. More than ten officers came in from downstairs. I felt kind of timid at that point. I'd just nodded, so if I didn't say anything, would they use more brutal torture on me? I thought I could just say a church's name and its approximate location. To my surprise, I gave him an inch, but he wanted

a mile. He peppered me with more questions about the church, and I really regretted giving Satan that in. Wouldn't I be a Judas if I kept on like that? I claimed ignorance when he asked me about other things. He couldn't get anywhere with me, so he let me go back to my room. In my room, I thought to myself, "Why was I trying to die? Does God want me to die? Isn't that a sign of weakness?" Then I remembered a hymn of God's words, "Seek to Love God No Matter How Great Your Suffering." **"Today, most people believe that suffering is without value, they're oppressed for their faith, they are renounced by the world, their home life is troubled, and their prospects are bleak. The suffering of some people reaches an extreme, and their thoughts turn to death. How does this show a God-loving heart? Such people are worthless, they have no perseverance, they are weak and powerless! ... Thus, during these last days you must bear testimony to God. No matter how great your suffering, you should walk until the very end, and even at your last breath, still you must be faithful to God and at the mercy of God; only this is truly loving God, and only this is the strong and resounding testimony"** (Follow the Lamb and Sing New Songs). As I thought over God's words, I saw how cowardly, weak, and incapable I was. I wanted to die because of my fleshly weakness, because I feared suffering. That couldn't glorify God. That wasn't true testimony. Before my arrest, I'd sworn before God that if I ever was arrested and persecuted by the Chinese Communist Party, I wanted to stand witness like the other brothers and sisters. I'd never betray God, be a Judas. But when something happened to me, in the face of police torture, I just thought about how I could get out of the situation. I didn't think about how to stand witness and satisfy God. I realized I didn't have any true faith or submission to God. The officers were torturing me so that I'd betray God and lose my testimony. If I escaped that through death, wouldn't I become

Satan's laughingstock? At this thought, I was filled with regret over my weakness. How could I have loosened my tongue? God gave me a chance to stand witness, but I didn't seize hold of it. This was hurtful and disappointing for God. I set my resolve that if they wanted me to identify houses, I wouldn't go. No matter how they tortured me, I would lean on God and stand witness!

At 6:30 a.m. the next morning, the director of the municipal anti-cult office saw how badly injured I was and had someone take me to the hospital so they wouldn't be held responsible. On the way to the hospital, he warned me sinisterly, "Don't say a word at the hospital, or you'll be responsible for the consequences!" Hearing that made me incredibly angry. They were intimidating me and wouldn't let me tell the truth even after hurting me that badly. It was evil and despicable! The doctor asked me how I'd gotten all those burns and I knew that even if I did tell him the truth, he couldn't do anything. I said it was from a thermos breaking. Disbelieving, he asked, "A broken thermos did all this?" The officer pulled the doctor aside right away and whispered briefly to him, after which the doctor started dressing my wounds, and said I needed to be an inpatient. The officer said it was a special situation and I couldn't stay, and made me sign a form accepting full liability. Then he took me right back to the brainwashing center. My injuries were too serious to attend classes, but the police didn't like that, so they'd send two people to watch over me and brainwash me every day. They tried both hard and soft tactics to get me to give up my faith.

Seventeen days later, before my wounds had healed, they sent me back to class. They had a university professor and a psychologist who feigned friendliness, saying nice things and trying to get close to me and get me to talk. I called out to God over and over asking Him to protect me from Satan's tricks. I shared testimony to God with them. They got angry when

they saw I wasn't falling for it. Over the next few days, they made me read books they'd written that blasphemed our church and watch some blasphemous videos. All those lies they'd created out of thin air left me indignant and nauseated. I didn't listen to a single thing they said.

One morning, the division director stormed into my living quarters with a few instructors. Seeing this unfold frightened me somewhat, so I said a silent prayer, asking God to give me wisdom so I could face those awful cops. He said menacingly, "We had a meeting yesterday about our Hundred-Day Battle against The Church of Almighty God. Sentences will be harsh. It will be even worse for young, single people like you. Especially the ones who won't budge like you will go straight to the firing squad. They'll blow your head off, blow your brains out." I felt a bit of a panic when he said that but then I thought of the Lord Jesus' words: **"For whoever will save his life shall lose it: and whoever will lose his life for My sake shall find it"** (Matthew 16:25). I knew that being martyred for God would be an honor, and would be commemorated by God. But betraying God for fear of death would offend His disposition and inspire His disgust. Even if my body went on living, I would be dead in God's eyes. My soul would be eliminated by God and I'd be punished in hell. Countless believers have been persecuted and martyred over the ages. They all stood witness for God. Being martyred would be God elevating me. I was willing to submit to God's arrangements and stand witness even if it meant death. When I kept quiet, the officer threatened me: "Do you want to go home, or to prison?" I very much wanted to go home, but I knew the price of that would be signing letters of repentance and cutting ties with the church. I said very resolutely, "Prison!" His eyes went wide with anger, then he pointed at me and said, "It looks like you haven't really suffered!" Then he stormed off angrily.

After that, they found a pastor to come brainwash me. The moment he walked in, he said, “Son, you’re still young. Listen to me, you’re on the wrong path.” He opened up a Bible to Matthew 24:23–24, saying, “You say the Lord Jesus has already returned, but look at what it says in the Bible: **‘Then if any man shall say to you, See, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; so that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.’** Anyone saying the Lord has come is wrong. You can’t follow this.” I took the Bible and responded, “The Lord Jesus was warning us that when He returns in the last days, false Christs and false prophets will show great signs and wonders to mislead people. He told us to be on our guard. If you say all news of the Lord’s coming is false, aren’t you denying the fact of the Lord’s own return? False Christs don’t possess the truth. They just deceive people with signs and wonders. Almighty God doesn’t display those things. He just expresses the truth and does His judgment work to fully cleanse and save mankind. Almighty God is the Lord Jesus returned, the one true God.” Seeing I hadn’t fallen for it, he said all sorts of blasphemous things. I responded angrily, “Blasphemy of the Holy Spirit won’t be forgiven, in this life or the next.” At this, he said to me, “You really are an obstinate kid. Come to your senses, son. Just say whatever they want and fess up. You’ll regret it if you really are locked up!” I said, “I won’t regret it, and I strongly advise you to seek the true way. Stop resisting God. It’ll be too late if you commit a horrible sin.” Exasperated, he told me, “You’re hopeless. You’re too stubborn.” Then he grudgingly got up and left.

A few days later, the head of the Criminal Police Brigade tried to force me to repeat things denying and blaspheming God. When I refused, he said aggressively, “Are you afraid of retribution? There’s no God, so where

would it come from? Aren't those who gave up their faith doing just fine?" I said, "Not dying for the moment doesn't indicate a good outcome. God doesn't punish people right away." He angrily grabbed me and slapped me a few times, but I still didn't say a word. I was thinking of something the Lord Jesus said: **"All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven to men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit shall not be forgiven to men"** (Matthew 12:31). With the strength of these words, I didn't waver at all. A couple of hours passed without me saying anything. Enraged, he dragged me back to the dormitory by the hair, then said sinisterly, "No food for him until he talks." I prayed to God within my heart and these words of the Lord Jesus came to mind: **"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God"** (Matthew 4:4). God's words are our sustenance for life. Even without food, I wouldn't die unless God allowed it. Surprisingly, a cleaning lady snuck me a steamed bun that night. I really felt that people's hearts and spirits are in God's hands. After that the police had me clean their office every day, and there happened to be a copy of The Word Appears in the Flesh on a desk. I snuck looks at it while doing the daily cleaning and God's words gave me faith and strength. The police were constantly deluging me with atheistic fallacies, but with the guidance of God's words, I wasn't impacted at all.

One day they had two university professors try all sorts of things to brainwash me and tempt me, saying, "If you don't come around and sign the three letters, you'll get five years in prison and later on it'll be hard to find a wife. How could you waste your youth like this? Is it worth it?" That did have an effect on me. I thought about how young I was, and wondered if I would really suffer there for years. As I thought about it, I realized I was falling for Satan's trick, so I rushed to say this prayer: "Oh God! I nearly fell for Satan's trick. Please protect me so I can stand witness." I thought of

several lines from a hymn of God's words after praying: **"Young people should not be without the truth, nor should they harbor hypocrisy and unrighteousness—they should stand firm in the proper stance. They should not just drift along, but should have the spirit to dare to make sacrifices and to struggle for justice and truth"** (Follow the Lamb and Sing New Songs, What the Young Must Pursue). I knew I should be able to endure any pain in order to gain the truth. I couldn't betray God for temporary comfort. I had to stand witness and satisfy God, no matter what the cops did to me. When I wouldn't say anything, they left, their hands tied. That afternoon, that pastor came back and said with a disingenuous smile, "I heard you're going to go to prison. You can't do that. Life in there is inhuman. Do you think a little guy like you can take it?" He took out his phone and showed me some photos of Christians who had been abused and said, "Look at them. Some of them got 10 years, some got 20. Some of them died in prison. I can see you're a true believer. Just sign whatever they want you to and you can practice your faith when you get out. There's no need to suffer this way! Sign now and I'll say a few words on your behalf. Otherwise, you don't stand a chance." I felt worried, thinking that if I really was sentenced, the police could torture me however they wanted to in prison. I'd be bound for so much more pain. I couldn't help but feel afraid, but I knew signing those letters would be betraying God and I'd have the mark of the beast. I prayed and called out to God in my heart, asking Him for faith so I could stand witness. I told the pastor, "I won't sign." He left, stymied.

The director of the municipal anti-cult office tried to get me to sign the three letters as well, saying to me angrily, "It's been two months without any change. I expect a certain attitude from you now. You can go home if you say you don't believe anymore, but you'll be sent off to prison right away if you say you do! Are you still a believer?" I felt really conflicted.

Saying yes would mean going to prison, and who knows what kind of torture awaited me there. But saying no would mean betraying God. I prayed, asking God to give me courage, and I felt ready to stand witness. I remembered a hymn of God's words just then: **"Jesus was able to complete God's commission—the work of all mankind's redemption—because He gave every care to God's will, without making any plans or arrangements for Himself. He was able to place God's management plan at the very center, and always prayed to the heavenly Father and sought the will of the heavenly Father. He prayed and said: 'God the Father! Accomplish that which is Your will, and act not according to My desires but according to Your plan. Man may be weak, but why should You care for him? How could man be worthy of Your concern, man who is like an ant in Your hand? In My heart, I wish only to accomplish Your will, and I would that You can do what You would do in Me according to Your own desires'"** (Follow the Lamb and Sing New Songs, Emulate the Lord Jesus). The Lord Jesus suffered when He was on His way to be crucified. He had fleshly weakness, but He was able to focus on completing God's commission. He submitted to God's arrangements in spite of physical pain. And Peter was willing to obey to the death for his love of God, to be crucified upside down for God. What did my trivial suffering count for? God's words bolstered my faith and I no longer felt afraid. I resolved that even if I did go to prison, I'd stand witness for God! I said very firmly, "Then I'll go to prison." Angered, he responded, "Pack up, you're off to prison tomorrow." Then he slammed the door and walked out in a huff. Surprisingly, two days later, four officers from my local police station came and said they were taking me home. In that moment I felt how wondrous God's work truly is, and I felt His care and mercy for me. The police brought me back into town and recorded an oral statement, and told me to

report to the station once a week. Through God's guidance, I later fled the area and was able to do my duty again.

Being arrested and tortured by the police are seared into me. I've seen how savage and inhuman the Communist Party is. I've fully seen their God-resisting essence. I thoroughly hate those demons. I also experienced the power and authority of God's words. Through trials and hardship, God kept using His words to guide me and give me faith and strength. I saw that only God loves us, and only God's words can be our lives. My faith in God became even greater. Thanks be to Almighty God!

90. Faith Perfected Through Trials and Tribulations

By Shu Chang, South Korea

My mom developed a health problem in 1993, and as a result my whole family gained faith in the Lord Jesus. After that, she experienced a miraculous recovery and I went to church with her every Sunday from then on. Then in the spring of 2000, the joyful news of the Lord's return reached our home. By reading Almighty God's words, we became certain that He is the Lord Jesus returned and we accepted Almighty God's work of the last days. We started reading Almighty God's words every day, enjoying the watering and sustenance they provide. This really nurtured me spiritually. Thinking about how many people longing for the Lord's coming still hadn't heard God's voice or welcomed the Lord's return, I knew I had to considerate God's will and share the kingdom gospel with them. I soon started doing my duty to share the gospel. But to my surprise, that got me arrested by the CCP.

It was January 2013 while I was in a gathering with six other brothers and sisters, when suddenly, more than 20 police officers burst in. Two of the men rushed to the front, guns in hand, and yelled at us, "Don't move! You're surrounded." Two others had electric batons and shouted, "Hands up and face the wall!" One of the officers with a gun said, "We've been following you for a couple weeks now. You're Xiaoxiao." Hearing this gave me a fright. How did they know my alias? And he said they'd been following me for a couple weeks, so did they know everywhere I'd been recently? Had all those brothers and sisters been arrested, too? I couldn't bear to give it any more thought. I just silently prayed for the others. Given the preparations the police had made, I knew they wouldn't let me go easily.

Anxious, I called out to God. Then these words from God came to mind: **“You should not be afraid of this and that; no matter how many difficulties and dangers you might face, you are capable of remaining steady before Me, unobstructed by any hindrance, so that My will may be carried out unimpeded. This is your duty.... Be not afraid; with My support, who could ever block this road?”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 10). God’s words brought me a sense of peace. I knew that all things were in His hands, even all those cops. God was my backup force, so I had to pray to Him and lean on Him. Realizing I’d been followed by the police all that time without realizing it, bringing such a big problem on the church, I hated myself for being so clueless and slow on the uptake. All I could do at that point was pray for my brothers and sisters. Setting my resolve, I said this prayer, “No matter how the police may torture me, I will never sell out my brothers and sisters. I won’t be a Judas and betray God.” I didn’t feel as scared after that prayer. I was filled with faith and strength.

The police turned the entire house upside down, acting like bandits. They confiscated our cellphones, eight video players, four tablets, dozens of gospel books and 10,000 yuan. They took me and two other sisters to the living room and forced us to squat on the floor. Just then the sound of the police beating the brothers nonstop started coming from one of the bedrooms. Incensed, I demanded, “We just believe in God, we haven’t done anything illegal. Why are you apprehending us?” One of the officers said hatefully, “Having faith is breaking the law, it’s a crime. If the Communist Party says you’re breaking a law, then you’re breaking a law. The Party doesn’t allow belief in God but you still dare do that in their territory. This is pitting yourselves against the Party. You have a death wish!” I said, “Isn’t freedom of belief legally guaranteed?” Laughing, they said, “You don’t

know a damn thing! Freedom of belief is just for show, for foreigners to see, but this is what you believers get!” As he said this he gave me a slap across the face and a female officer came up and kicked me in the arm. I was infuriated and these words of God came to mind: **“Religious freedom? The legitimate rights and interests of citizens? They are all tricks for covering up sin!”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Work and Entry (8)). Having the Communist Party in charge is actually having Satan in charge. All of their laws are meant to deceive. They tell outsiders that there’s freedom of belief, but the reality is that they don’t allow anyone to believe in God and take the right path. They won’t allow anything positive. They arrest and harm Christians on a massive scale. Those cops were just bandits and rogues in uniform. It was ridiculous of me to try to reason with them! When they put me into the police vehicle, I saw that there were more than a dozen police vehicles surrounding us.

Once we’d been taken to the county’s National Security Brigade, an officer said to me, “We’ve reeled in a big fish with you. We know all about you. We know every city, every county you’ve been to in the past couple of weeks. You must be a church leader, otherwise we wouldn’t have mobilized such a large force to get you. We won’t interrogate you here. We’ve got a ‘nice place’ for that. I’m just afraid it’ll overwhelm you!” Only then did I realize that they mistook me for a leader in the church. I felt a little relieved then, knowing that the real leaders would be a bit safer. But I was still worried. I knew they wouldn’t let me off easily, for they thought I was a church leader. I didn’t know how they’d torment me. I prayed to God for faith and strength, to help me stand witness. After 11 o’clock that night, they put me into a police vehicle to take me to that “nice place.” In the car, a cop said, “You guys don’t know how to handle these believers in Almighty God. You have to take a really heavy hand to get anything out of

them. We have to do whatever will work, otherwise they might not confess.” The other officer said, “Oh yeah, for sure. Word has it that you’ve got the ultimate trick with those believers. That’s why we have you on this.” Hearing this made me wonder what kind of torture they had in store for me. I silently prayed to God, and these words from the Lord Jesus came to mind: **“Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell”** (Matthew 10:28). **“For whoever will save his life shall lose it: and whoever will lose his life for My sake shall find it”** (Matthew 16:25). God’s words gave me strength in my faith. I knew my life was in God’s hands, that my soul was in His hands. I resolved to submit to God’s orchestrations and never betray Him, even if it meant my death!

They took me to the county’s police station and the second we got into the interrogation room, I heard the sound of a brother crying bitterly. An officer gave an order to turn off the surveillance equipment, then two others came over and handcuffed me, with my right arm twisted behind my shoulder and my left arm pulled up from below behind my back. They yanked the handcuffs up and down, and it felt like my arms were about to break. After that, they shoved an arm of the tiger chair between my arms and my back. I felt like my arms were being ripped apart. It hurt so much that sweat was just rolling down my face. An officer hauled on the handcuffs and said, “Hurt much? How does that feel?” Another said, laughing, “Why don’t you just work as an escort? Then we wouldn’t arrest you.” The rest of them all burst out laughing at that. I was nauseated by their total lack of shame. I’d never imagined something so disgusting could come out of the mouths of police officers. They’re lowlier than beasts! Then one of them said, “Let’s not rush this interrogation. She’ll be dying to tell us what she knows in the end. Starting now, don’t let her eat, sleep, or

use the bathroom. Let's see how long she can hold out!" Then he pulled hard on my arms, twisting them even as they were cuffed to a waist-high metal rail. I couldn't kneel down or stand up, and my back and legs started to ache before long. They didn't allow me to sleep or even close my eyes. The moment my eyes started to droop, the police would smack the table, kick the stool, or bang on the metal rails. Otherwise, they'd shout right into my ear or make all kinds of weird noises to frighten me. This left me in a state of high alert and I couldn't find a moment's peace. I silently prayed and called out to God nonstop and then thought of this in Almighty God's words: **"You must suffer hardship for the truth, you must give yourself to the truth, you must endure humiliation for the truth, and to gain more of the truth you must undergo more suffering. This is what you should do"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Experiences of Peter: His Knowledge of Chastisement and Judgment). God's words gave me faith. Suffering anything was worth it to gain the truth, and I had to stick with it, no matter how much I suffered. I was determined to stand witness and humiliate Satan.

The next morning, six or seven officers came to question me about the location of the church's funds and who the upper leaders were. They smacked me viciously when I wouldn't tell them anything. Right after they left, a few others came to ask me the same questions. They questioned me nonstop, 24 hours a day. After four days, my entire body was bloated and my calves were so swollen they were as thick as my thighs. I was starving and exhausted. A female officer saw me nodding off and kicked me in the feet as hard as she could. I had lost feeling in my entire lower body and my back was in unbearable pain, as if it had been broken. My eyes were swollen and stung terribly. It felt like my eyeballs would pop out at any moment. It was incredibly painful. The idea of closing my eyes or resting

my legs for even a moment sounded like a true luxury. I didn't know how much longer they were going to torture me. I felt my body had already reached its limit, that I couldn't hold on much longer. I felt incredibly weak in my heart. I prayed to God, asking Him for faith and strength. Then I thought of these hymns of God's words: **"Have you ever accepted the blessings that you were given? Have you ever sought the promises that were made for you? You will surely, under the guidance of My light, break through the stranglehold of the forces of darkness. You will surely not, in the midst of darkness, lose the light guiding you. You will surely be the master of all creation. You will surely be an overcomer before Satan. You will surely, at the downfall of the kingdom of the great red dragon, stand up amid the myriad throngs to bear witness to My victory. You will surely stand firm and unwavering in the land of Sinim. Through the sufferings you endure, you will inherit My blessings, and will surely radiate My glory throughout the entire universe"** (Follow the Lamb and Sing New Songs, Song of the Overcomers). **"In the past, Peter was crucified upside down for the sake of God; but you should satisfy God in the end, and exhaust all your energy for His sake. What can a created being do on behalf of God?"** (Follow the Lamb and Sing New Songs, A Created Being Should Be at the Mercy of God). God's words encouraged me and bolstered my strength. I'd been subjected to cruel torture, but God had stayed by my side and He'd been guiding me with His words. I also knew that I was undergoing this kind of tribulation so that God could perfect my faith, and that I had to give victorious testimony before the great red dragon. If I betrayed God out of fear of fleshly suffering, my life would be left without meaning. It would be a great humiliation. I thought of all those apostles and prophets throughout the ages—they were persecuted and faced death, but they all kept their faith in God and bore resounding witnesses for

Him. I was being tortured and ravaged by the police with God's permission. My stature was small and I couldn't remotely compare to the saints of the ages, but I was very fortunate to have the chance to bear that testimony for God. I was willing to put my life on the line to stand witness for God, to bring God's heart a bit of comfort. Thinking over God's words also seemed to alleviate my physical pain quite a bit. Seeing me dozing off, the captain grabbed my hair and yanked my head back and forth, and punched me in the head and the chest with his fist. They wouldn't let me use the bathroom, either, saying I couldn't go until a certain time. When I did go to the bathroom, a few male officers stood next to the toilet and said all sorts of vile things. I was so ashamed. I felt like I wanted to die. Then I thought of these words from God: **"Perhaps you all remember these words: 'For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.' You have all heard these words before, yet none of you understood their true meaning. Today, you are profoundly aware of their true significance. These words shall be fulfilled by God during the last days, and they shall be fulfilled in those who have been brutally persecuted by the great red dragon in the land where it lies coiled. The great red dragon persecutes God and is the enemy of God, and so, in this land, those who believe in God are thus subjected to humiliation and oppression, and these words are fulfilled in you, this group of people, as a result"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Is the Work of God As Simple As Man Imagines?). The enlightenment from God's words showed me that being humiliated and tortured for my faith was suffering for the sake of righteousness. It was God's grace giving me that chance to bear witness; it was an honor for me. But when I felt a little embarrassed or experienced a little physical suffering, I lost my faith in God and even thought about death. I put too much stock in personally gaining

glory or humiliation. How was that any kind of testimony? I had resolved that even if it meant my death, I'd stand witness for God, but I was thinking of ending it all just because of a little fleshly suffering. Wasn't I falling for one of Satan's tricks? Wasn't Satan trying to get me to betray God? I couldn't retreat and become Satan's laughingstock. I had to keep on living, stand witness for God, and bring shame to Satan! Once I'd understood God's will, I said this prayer: "God, I'm ready to put myself in Your hands. No matter how Satan may torture me, I'll stand witness for You and never betray You. I'll follow Your orchestrations and arrangements in all things!" I felt strengthened after my prayer.

Back in the interrogation room, the police turned on a computer where they brought up photos of a few sisters for me to identify. They also said that around 2 p.m. on January 24, they'd arrested brothers and sisters at quite a few different locations. It was a coordinated operation. I was so angry. Seeing I wouldn't answer, they both threatened and enticed me, saying things like, "We already know all about you guys. There's no use putting up a fight. Everyone else has talked, so what good is it for you to hold out for their sake? Even if we let you go now, your church won't let you back in. Wise up—tell us who the upper leaders are and where the church's funds are kept. Then we'll get you home in time for the New Year celebrations." I still didn't say a word, so they yelled at me, "If you don't tell us where the church's money is, we'll strip you down, hang you from the ceiling and beat you to a bloody pulp. We'll savor every minute of it." Hearing this scared me. I saw those devils were capable of anything at all and I didn't know if I could take it. I was really on edge and I didn't know what they'd do to me that night. Hit with wave after wave of fear and sadness, I felt incredibly helpless. I rushed to pray to God and ask for His protection. I thought of these words of God after my prayer: "**When people**

are ready to sacrifice their lives, everything becomes trifling, and no one can get the better of them. What could be more important than life? Thus, Satan becomes incapable of doing any more in people, there is nothing it can do with man. Although, in the definition of the ‘flesh’ it is said that the flesh is corrupted by Satan, if people truly give themselves over, and are not driven by Satan, then no one can get the better of them” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Interpretations of the Mysteries of “God’s Words to the Entire Universe”, Chapter 36). Through the enlightenment of God’s words I understood that I was terribly afraid of being shamed and of dying. Satan was seizing hold of my weaknesses to get me to betray God. That was its trick. If I could put my life on the line, what was there that I couldn’t take on? I also saw that their treating me that way wasn’t bringing shame upon me, but it was just the police being evil and despicable. My flesh isn’t worth anything. I became willing to sacrifice my life to bear witness for God and shame Satan. I knew it would be worthwhile if I could give testimony for God, that I wouldn’t have lived in vain. At this thought, I didn’t feel afraid anymore. I was filled with strength and faith.

Around 1 p.m. that afternoon, my heart started racing and I was having a hard time breathing. My legs felt weak and I just collapsed onto the floor. Seeing me like that, they just said, “Don’t bother acting like you’re about to die. We still won’t let you go. The Central Committee says that it doesn’t matter if we beat a believer to death. One more dead means one less believer! We could just dig a pit and throw your body in. No one would know.” Later on they saw I really wasn’t doing well, and afraid I’d die and they’d lose their lead, they took me to the hospital for a checkup. The doctor said my strength had been sapped and it had triggered a heart problem. He said I should get some food and rest. But they didn’t care if I

lived or died. Half an hour after getting back from the hospital, they had me handcuffed to the metal rails again. Seeing they weren't getting anywhere with their harsh approach, they switched to a softer one. One of the officers said to me in a fake gentle tone that he wasn't against faith in the Lord, and his grandmother was a Christian. He also said he didn't have a girlfriend, and seeing how pretty I was, he'd really like to find a girlfriend like me. Then another guy said, "Even if you don't think of yourself, think of your parents. It's almost Chinese New Year and everyone else is with their families. But you're here suffering. Your parents would be so sad if they knew." Another officer chimed in, "I have a kid about your age and I hate to see you suffer this way, too. Just tell me what you need—I have final say around here. I can also help you find a job. You can tell whatever it is that you know just to me." Seeing this unctuous behavior on their part was nauseating for me, and I thought of God's words: **"You must be awake and waiting at all times, and you must pray before Me more. You must recognize the various plots and cunning schemes of Satan, recognize the spirits, know people, and be able to discern all kinds of people, events, and things"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 17). Satan was trying to use my emotions and some little favors to buy me off, to tempt me into betraying God. It was shameless and despicable! I knew I couldn't fall for Satan's tricks. After that, no matter how they threatened or enticed me, I didn't say a word. They'd come in groups of six or seven at a time, and they took turns questioning me for eight days and nights. They used intimidation, threats, and torture to extract a confession from me, but they didn't get any information out of me. Finally, one of the officers said, "You have incredible resolve, and your God is great." Hearing this made me so happy—I'd seen Satan shamed and defeated.

They took me to a detention center after that. When I got there, a female officer conducted a strip search on me with the surveillance on. Once I got to the cell, all the other prisoners eyed me savagely, and the prison guards egged them on, saying, “This one’s another believer. Be sure to ‘take good care’ of her.” Before I could even get my bearings, a prisoner ordered me to take a cold shower, and I was trembling as basin after basin of cold water was thrown on my body. The other prisoners were off to the side just laughing. I had to carry dozens of buckets of water every day to clean the bathroom and do the cleaning, and at mealtimes they intentionally gave me less food. I could never eat my fill. At night, they’d kick my bed frame really hard so I couldn’t sleep. It scared me and set my heart pounding. It was awful. Later they made me sleep alone on the cold, concrete floor. Not only that, but the guards incited the head prisoner and some murderers to torment me, and the police were always questioning me and threatening me, saying, “You’re a political criminal. No one would care if you died. If you don’t talk, we’ll just keep you in here indefinitely. Don’t count on ever getting out of here!” Hearing that felt awful for me. Every day of those four months had been torture and I really couldn’t take it anymore. I didn’t know when it would all end. I felt I didn’t have the strength to keep on going. I was feeling really weak. I was wishing for death as an escape from the pain. I prayed to God in my pain, and cried bitterly as I prayed. I thought about how God became flesh, coming to the earth to express the truth and save mankind. I’d been enjoying the watering and sustenance of God’s words but I wanted to leave this world before I’d repaid God’s love. I was filled with guilt and regret; I felt terrible, as if a blow had been struck to my heart. Then I thought of these words from God: **“Thus, during these last days you must bear testimony to God. No matter how great your suffering, you should walk until the very end,**

and even at your last breath, still you must be faithful to God and at the mercy of God; only this is truly loving God, and only this is the strong and resounding testimony” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Only by Experiencing Painful Trials Can You Know the Loveliness of God). **“Since you are a human being, you should expend yourself for God and endure all suffering! You should gladly and assuredly accept the little suffering you are subjected to today and live a meaningful life, like Job and Peter. ... You are people who pursue the right path, those who seek improvement. You are people who rise up in the nation of the great red dragon, those whom God calls righteous. Is that not the most meaningful life?”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Practice (2)). I felt really ashamed in the face of these words of God. God became flesh and came to the earth to express so many truths for our sustenance, and He needed people to bear witness for Him now, but I wanted to escape that situation through death, just because I’d experienced a little humiliation, because I’d physically suffered. That wasn’t true obedience. Wasn’t that rebelling against God? I thought about how Job lost all of his belongings and his children, and he suffered the torment of illness, but he never blamed God. He kept praising God’s name and he submitted to God. He was a resounding witness for God. And through the ages, disciples and prophets had given up their lives and shed their blood for God. I’d enjoyed so much from God, but what had I sacrificed for Him? I was so selfish and despicable, and I wasn’t living up to the price God had paid for me. I wasn’t even worthy of being called human! I came before God in repentance and prayer, saying, “Oh God, I’ve been wrong. I shouldn’t be thinking of death. I want to be like Job, like Peter, and no matter what I have to face, I wish to stand witness for You.” Praying gave me the strength to face whatever came next. Before long, the head prisoner was transferred to prison to serve out

her sentence and a few other prisoners were transferred in, who started taking care of me. They shared some daily necessities with me and gave me clothing to wear for the season. I knew this was God's orchestration and arrangement. Just as it says in God's words: **"Any and all things, whether living or dead, will shift, change, renew, and disappear in accordance with God's thoughts. Such is the way in which God presides over all things"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God Is the Source of Man's Life).

Later on, I met a sister in the detention center. It was really heartwarming for me. We copied out some of God's words in secret to encourage each other and fellowship. My heart felt full and joyful. Then one day in September, the police came to question me again. They took my photo as soon as I got into the interrogation room and they said they'd use it to get online and find my identity. They threatened me, saying, "Your case is just about settled. Don't even think of getting out! The Communist Party's policy for Christians is to turn one-year sentences into three-year sentences, and three-year sentences into seven-year sentences. They can beat them to death on a whim and no one's held responsible for it. We'll see how long you can hold on." Seeing how evil and despicable the CCP is made me hate Satan the devil even more. I would absolutely never give in and betray God. I said to them seriously, "You can just forget about that. I have no plans of getting out. As long as I can know God and stand witness for the Creator in my lifetime, it'll be worth it, even if I die in here!" The police then stormed out in anger.

I was released in November 2013, after 10 months of being illegally detained by the authorities. Even though I suffered physically in my experience of being arrested by the Communist Party, God's words were enlightening me the whole time, guiding me to triumph over Satan's temptations and to stand witness. I truly experienced the power and

authority of God's words and my faith in God grew. I also clearly saw the CCP's devilish essence of hating God and being His enemy. I completely turned my back on it and rejected it, and strengthened my resolve to follow God. Thank Almighty God!



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Testimonies of Experiences Before the Judgment Seat of Christ

By Christians of The Church of Almighty God

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